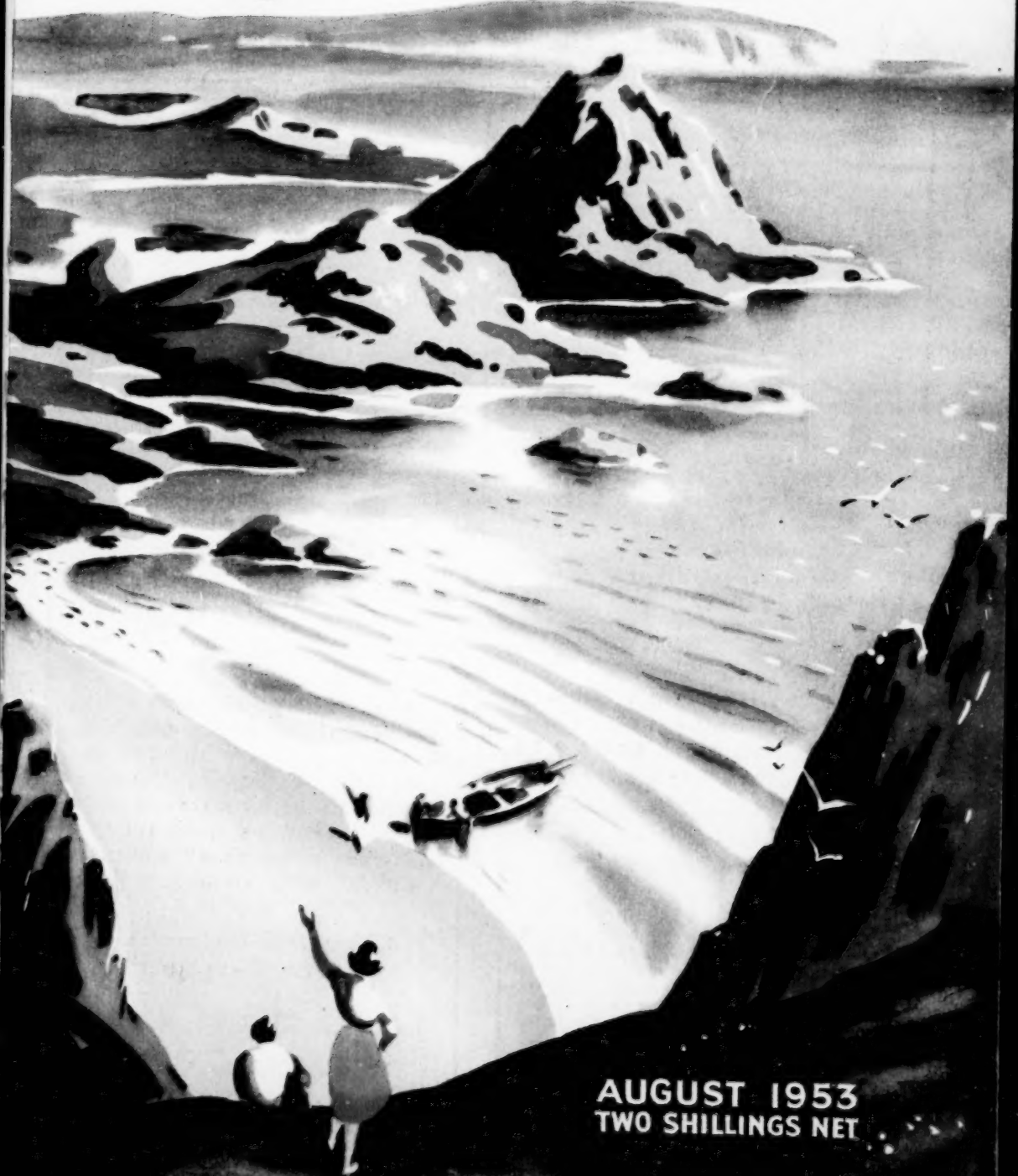


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Contents—August 1953

	PAGE
RAISE NO MORE SPIRITS	John Moore 449
PORTRAIT OF A HOTEL:	
Past and Present at the Monte Rosa	Cicely Williams 457
PELORUS JACK: New Zealand's Famous Dolphin Pilot	George M. Fowlds 461
THE OLD DOCTOR (Poem)	Margaret Stanley-Wrench 462
MY IRISHMEN	T. Bedford Franklin 463
HIGH ON THE HILL (Poem)	Tom Wright 465
MAESTRO OF THE MERRY-GO-ROUNDS:	
Frederick Savage and the Steam Roundabout	A. J. Forrest 466
DIAMONDS	T. J. Clogger 469
ISLE OF KINGS (Poem)	Elizabeth Fleming 471
THE CASE OF VALENTIN LECORMIER	Geoffrey Household 472
RETURN (Poem)	J. Mackay 480
MECHANICAL CRICKET	John Downton 481
A NEW ERA IN GREENLAND	Frank Moss 482
THE HOLIDAY	Alan Wykes 485
PEAT-FIRE MEMORIES: VIII.—The Sabbath Day	Kenneth Macdonald 489
UNTAPPED WEALTH FROM BRITAIN'S SEAS	John Newell 491
THE RIVER (Poem)	Lillias Magdalene Scott 493
THE BOA	Andrew Cruickshank 494
TWICE-TOLD TALES: XXXII.—Victorian Lie	497
ANTHILLS	A. Turner 498
PLANT versus ANIMAL	Herbert Mace 500
RISKS (Poem)	Doreen King 502
THE PEPPER-TREE	Dal Stivens 503
KINTYRE'S LAST BARD AND FOX-HUNTER	Dugald Macintyre 506
TO A SONG-THRUSH (Poem)	Gilbert Rae 508
SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE—Freezing Our Daily Bread. The Adjustable Lamp.	
Washing-up by Machine. Door-Buffers. Prospecting for Antibiotics. Domestic	
Measuring-Jug. Rust-Preventing Envelopes. An Electric-Burner for Laboratories.	
British Progress with ACTH. Television in Industry and Business	
509	
BETTER STRAWBERRIES, PLEASE	W. E. Shewell-Cooper 512

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Raise No More Spirits . . .

JOHN MOORE

'Raise no more spirits than you can conjure down.'—PROVERB.

IT was during the holiday season that the green line on the graph began to waver, dipped, recovered and dipped again, then suddenly fell away from its pinnacle and took, for the first time in twelve months, a continuous course downwards. The gradient was not very steep; but it indicated, if the figures were accurate, that half-a-million people had abruptly lost interest in the homely adventures of Mr Brick the village grocer, of Mrs Brick his homely wife, of their son Henry and their daughter Joyce, of their relations and neighbours, and of Irene, pronounced Ireen, who was Henry's Intended. In short, it meant that the radio serial called *The Corner Shop*, which was nearing its five-hundredth performance, had unaccountably begun to lose popularity; and all through August, in Tomlinson's office, five pairs of eyes watched the descent of that green line which until then had climbed as doggedly as the youth in 'Excelsior!'

But because of the holidays nobody worried much, and even the Director, at the Weekly Programme Conference, passed it off with a shrug: 'As for *your* listeners, Tomlinson, it looks as if they're at Blackpool or Brighton or somewhere, basking on the sands. I don't blame 'em.' The Board Room was stifling, and the Director said that anybody who felt too hot could take his jacket off. Tomlinson did so, and the portrait of Lord Reith over the fireplace stared down upon his braces disapprovingly.

When the conference was over, he went back to his office, where four typewriters pit-pattered all day long. He had become so used to the noise that he was no longer aware of it, and it was as if a familiar clock had stopped when the girls weren't working. This loud silence, which greeted him now, was somehow ominous, so that he said: 'What's up?'

'We've just had the latest figures from Listener Research. They're rather devastating.'

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

'Holidays, I expect,' said Tomlinson lightly.

Miss Crowhurst, his secretary, who tended the graph and strangely cherished it, pointed with her ruler to a neat little X where the descending green line was intersected by a sharply ascending red one. Miss Crowhurst hated this red line, and regarded it in the nature of a personal enemy. 'If it's simply due to the hols,' she said, 'then please say why more people are listening to *The Wilkinsons* and less people are listening to *Us*?'

'Yes, that's the point,' put in Miss Pegley, looking up from her card-index. 'And, what's more, it's happened during some of our best episodes—when we went for the day to Weston-super-Mare, and Pop went prawning and fell in, and Henry met Caroline and took her to the dance on the Pier, and we all had a roadside picnic on the way home.'

Tomlinson was by now quite used to that 'we'; indeed, he was no more aware of it than of the perpetual typewriters. For all he knew, outside the office, Miss Crowhurst and Miss Pegley had private lives, played tennis at the club, held hands with boy-friends in the pictures, went to the Saturday night dances at the Palais; but within this little room they thought and felt as the Bricks, lived the lives of the Bricks, were to all intents and purposes anonymous members of the Brick family, sharing vicariously its trivial joys and sorrows. The metamorphosis from their real selves into Bricks had happened over many months, almost imperceptibly. Miss Crowhurst had been working on the programme ever since its conception, two years ago, in Tomlinson's mind. Miss Pegley had come into the office soon after the first broadcast. The other two girls were newer, and were not yet completely identified with the Brick household. Sometimes one heard them chattering together about their own boys and interests and hobbies, and it sounded as out of place as the worldly gossip of novices in a nunnery; but such lapses became less frequent as they, too, were caught up in the toils of the Brick fairy-tale. They no longer needed to refer to Miss Pegley's immense card-index, in which every incident was recorded, every aspect of all the characters set down for the sake of continuity—for example: *Mrs Brick becomes Secretary of Women's Institute* (Episode 9), *Mrs Brick wins prize with pickled shallots at Village Flower Show* (Episode 15), *Henry has Spots* (Episode 233), *Irene's unsuccessful Home Perm* (Episode 230). They triumphed with Mrs Brick,

sorrowed with Irene; and the girl whose duty it was to draw a map of the Bricks' village and keep it up to date—*Pond where Henry went fishing for Eels* (Episode 394)—hardly ever had to consult it, for the imaginary village was more familiar to her than her own suburban street. So, bit by bit, the topsy-turvydom crept upon them all, until life was a walking shadow, and the only reality belonged to the Bricks. Now and then, with a nasty little twinge of apprehension, Tomlinson suspected that something of this sort was actually happening to himself. 'Anything special in the letters?' he said to Miss Crowhurst.

'Just the usual loonies.'

He glanced through the pile of letters on his desk. Here, too, the boundaries of reality became curiously blurred. A girl wrote, quite seriously it appeared, to apply for the job of Shop Assistant in the grocery. She was 19, she had been employed at the Co-op, she could supply excellent references. There was nothing in her letter to suggest that she was otherwise than sane. Three women sent for Mrs Brick's benefit recipes for home-made wine, which had been mentioned in a recent episode; three more solemnly warned her against over-indulgence. A man who couldn't spell asked whether Mr Brick ever had 'a pound of shuger off the ration to sell.' Somebody else was sympathetic about Henry's spots: 'A pimply face can be a great embarrassment, as I know to my sorrow. Girls stare at you. Is there no Cure?' A mad world, my masters.

Only the bottom letter in the pile was anonymous. It ran:

'Dear Mr Producer:

It wasn't right of you to make Henry take that Caroline dancing at Weston and kiss her good-night afterwards. After all, he's walking out with Irene. The BBC has a responsibility to Youth and it shouldn't give people Ideas.

Yours truly,

A Mother.'

Tomlinson handed the letters back to Miss Crowhurst. 'Answer them all, of course, except the anonymous one. Lord, what a prig!'

Miss Crowhurst looked at Tomlinson, rather queerly, he thought.

'You mean that mother? Didn't we have two or three last week,' she said, 'on more or less the same lines?'

'We did. What of it?'

RAISE NO MORE SPIRITS . . .

'Nothing.' But her eyes turned towards her beloved graph on the wall above her desk. 'I was only wondering—'

'Yes?'

'Wondering whether—'

But at that moment there came a very loud and boisterous knock on the door, and there burst in—for his visits were always like a minor explosion—Mr Ernest Adams, much better known as Joseph Brick.

'AND when I seed wot I 'ad done,' quoted Mr Adams, from one of his innumerable, obscure, and far-from-drawing-room stories, 'I says to meself: "Gawd, wot 'as I done?" That was the way I felt that morning. As soon as the postman had been, I began to wonder what had hit me. Just take a dekkko at those.' The pockets of the tweed jacket were stuffed with letters, which he now cast dramatically on Tomlinson's desk. 'Just take a dekkko.'

He stood with his hands on his hips, legs planted wide apart, a cheerful grin wrinkling his honest-as-the-day features, just as if he were about to take a customer's order for the rations and a tin of Nescafé and a pound of tapioca. Ten million listeners, whenever they thought of a village grocer, visualised Mr Adams standing like that. Less than two years ago he had been a comparatively unknown actor, playing minor parts in a fortnightly repertory; to-day, he had a brand of flour named after him ('Pop Brick's Self-Raising'), his photograph on almost every hoarding, advertising a new kind of soap-flakes, and a film-contract worth five thousand pounds awaiting his signature.

Perhaps some of these considerations were in his mind now as he shook his finger half-playfully at Tomlinson and said: 'We've got to be careful, old boy; we've got to be *darned* careful.'

Tomlinson was thumbing his way through the letters. A few were abusive, many were indignant, but most of them seemed to have been written more in sorrow than in anger. A common theme, however, ran through them all: 'Keep your eyes on that minx Caroline. Don't trust her, Pop. She'll be the ruin of that son of yours if you don't look out. Don't let him jilt poor Irene. Remember your duty as a father.' There were thirty-nine of them altogether.

Mr Adams said: 'Well, after brekker I rang

up the Missus'—he had started calling her the Missus in fun, but now it came quite naturally; and the plump, comfortable ex-Fairy Queen of provincial pantomime who now played Mrs Brick spoke of him as Hubby or Pop—'I rang up the Missus and she read me some of *her* billy-dooos over the phone. They were pretty hot, I can tell you. "Are you blind—or just stupid? *Immorality going on*—under your own eyes—and you can't see it!"'

'But what have we *done*?' Tomlinson felt quite helpless and bewildered. 'There was nothing in the script. I swear there was nothing. We've always been careful.'

'It's Caroline,' put in Miss Crowhurst quietly. 'I always suspected it was Caroline.' And she pointed with her ruler at the green line on the graph.

'Get out Caroline's card.'

Miss Pegley's practised finger dipped into the card-index and found the right one straight away.

'Read it out to us, please.'

'Episode 463. *Henry meets Caroline for the first time on the beach at Weston-super-Mare.*'

'Don't bother about the numbers of the episodes. Just carry straight on.'

Miss Pegley took a deep breath. '*Slim, tall, dark, and attractive; in a green swim-suit. Athletic. Swims much better than Henry. He invites her to the dance. She doesn't go to many dances. Prefers highbrow music. Doesn't like the pictures. Keen on amateur dramatics. Reads Shakespeare. Quotes Juliet. They walk on the beach. Good-night kiss.*'

'Not much harm in that, is there? It was just an ordinary kiss. Lord, this is absolutely crazy!' exclaimed Tomlinson. 'Just look up the script, please, Miss Pegley. What does it actually *say* about the kiss?'

Miss Pegley turned up the script as a matter of form; but the scene was as fresh in her mind as if she had been there, an invisible eavesdropper on the beach. 'He says: "*You're different, somehow, Caroline.*" She says: "*Different? What do you mean?*" Henry: "*Other girls, they just think about film-stars and band-leaders. You talk about things I've never heard of even, and make them sound ever so exciting. Caroline, I couldn't bear it if I was never to see you again. Would you mind too?*" Then she says, softly: "*I should mind a bit, Henry.*" Then Henry: "*I didn't ought to reelly, but—*" And they kiss once, and she says: "*You silly boy,*" and that's all.'

'What did I tell you?' said Tomlinson

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

'Have you got anything more on Caroline's card?'

'Not very much. "*Corresponding with Henry. Ditto. Ditto. Henry reading Shakespeare in secret. Henry's tiff with Irene. Henry asks Pop and Mum if he can invite Caroline to stay for her holidays. Row with Irene. Caroline arrives next Thursday.*" That brings it up to date.'

Tomlinson took another glance at the letters and read: '*P.S. And when she comes to stay under your own roof you look out for goings-on.*'

'The Public,' said Mr Adams, who with his film-contract and his ten million fans felt that he was entitled to speak with authority, 'the Public ain't such dam' fools, old boy, as some of us might think. You don't want to underestimate the Public. There's something behind this, and I think I've got a clue. If you read those letters of mine carefully—'

'God forbid,' said Tomlinson irritably.

'You'll find,' Mr Adams wagged a reproving finger, 'that there's one particular adjective most of 'em apply to Caroline. They call her stuck-up. "Setting herself above other people." That's a phrase which comes in quite a lot. Now am I or am I not on to something here? Is she putting their backs up, do you think? What was it Kipling said in "If"? "And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise."'

'Just because she quoted from *Romeo and Juliet*—once!'

'Then there's Irene. Well, I know Irene has got her faults.' Suddenly, and with mounting dismay, Tomlinson realised that Mr Adams was talking exactly like Pop Brick. 'She's got her faults, and she's a bit feather-headed, and she spends more time in the pictures than is good for a growing girl, in my humble view. And working in that gown-shop I daresay has given her ideas above her station. I'll allow you all that. But girls settle down when they're married, and, if you ask me, I'd say she wouldn't make a bad wife for our Henry, in the end—'

Mr Adams bumbled on, pipe in hand, genial, confidential, Simple-Simon-was-a-pie-man, honest as the day. Thus Mr Brick addressed his pals in the British Legion Club, in the evenings; and Tomlinson, feeling like Frankenstein, said to himself: 'God help me, I have created him!'

'While as for that Caroline—' Mr Adams went on.

'She'd make a damned sight better wife than your stinking little beast of a Henry deserves!'

Four heads looked up sharply from their typewriters. The loud silence returned. Tomlinson was aware once again of Miss Crowhurst's queer, appraising glance directed at him. He heard Mr Adams saying 'Come, come!' and clicking his tongue; one didn't, after all, speak in such terms to a father about his only son. 'Henry,' he declared portentously, 'is the Universal Adolescent, gauche and coltish. But not stinking, old boy, not a little beast. He is simply You and I, as once we were.' It was a nauseating thought, all the more so because Tomlinson realised for the first time that it was probably true. Meanwhile Mr Adams continued soothingly: 'We all realise, old boy, that it's *your* programme and *your* invention; *you* write it and *you* produce it, and we'd all be nowhere without you. We actors are just instruments in your orchestra. We Interpret, but we do not Create. So if you still want to put Caroline over—if you *must* keep her in the story,' he put in a shade grudgingly, 'well, it's simply a question of the presentation, that's all.'

Tomlinson began to feel slightly ridiculous. 'Sorry,' he muttered. 'This damned thundery heat. . . .'

'Yes, and we all work too hard,' said Mr Adams, relighting his pipe and personifying plain honest-to-God sanity as he did so. 'I'll tell you what—let's slip across to the Bolivar and have a pint, and sort of—hammer out a line of policy together?'

Tomlinson, for whom the frontiers of sanity were becoming increasingly obscure, seized hold thankfully of the solid reality represented by a bar. He agreed that it was a jolly good idea, and as they went out together Mr Adams brickishly laid a hand on his arm.

When the door had closed behind them, Miss Crowhurst observed to the room at large: 'The trouble is he's half in love with that girl.'

'With what girl?' demanded the newer of the two young typists eagerly.

'Yes, who?' echoed the other. Little innocents, they still were wrapped in their cocoons of actuality; an aura of real life clung to them, as it clings perhaps to ghosts just landed on the wharf of Lethe.

Miss Crowhurst regarded them almost with disdain: 'With Caroline, sillies. It's plain as a pikestaff. I've watched it coming on for

weeks. He thinks she's the cat's whiskers—the stuck-up bitch!

THOUGH Miss Crowhurst, to say the least of it, exaggerated, it was true enough that Tomlinson regarded Caroline somewhat romantically, for like a good many heroines of fiction she was the personification of a boyhood dream. In fact, he had spoken no more than half-a-dozen breathless sentences to the girl in the green swim-suit whom he had met on a holiday beach during his seventeenth summer; and they had been breathless only because they consisted of apologies for his inability to blow up her Li-lo, which unknown to him had a pinhole in it, so that he had nearly burst his lungs, and set the blood singing in his ears, but all in vain. She had thanked him very nicely, but, since he was a youth as oafish and spotty as Henry Brick himself, that had been the end of the encounter as far as she was concerned. It had not been so for Tomlinson. How often, during the weeks that followed, had he imagined himself swimming at her side, far out into the sparkling sea! How many times, despite the weakness of his froglike breast stroke, had he rescued her from drowning when she was afflicted with a sudden cramp! And there were dances on the Pier, of course, and moonlit walks and talks afterwards along the dim white sizzling surf-line. Moreover, since young men in love with such phantoms naturally contrive to make them as wise and witty as they are beautiful, it was a Beatrice and a Benedick who spoke winged words to each other as they dallied upon that delectable shore.

In the course of time Caroline's place at Tomlinson's side was usurped by girls more substantial though less beautiful, and much less clever, than she. The dream became dormant, but did not die; and so it happened that when he sat down to write Episode 463 some mysterious catalyst worked in his memory and Caroline sprang fully-arm'd into the script like Athene from the brain of Zeus. In a trice, the character whom he had intended as a mere foil for Irene became Irene's dangerous rival; supplanted Irene in Henry's affections; changed Henry from a figure of fun into at least a kind of pilgrim towards grace; and so altered, willy-nilly, the whole course of Tomlinson's serial.

'It was absurd of me,' said Tomlinson in the Bolivar, over his third pint of beer, 'to get so

RAISE NO MORE SPIRITS . . .

het up about it and to speak as I did in the office. One becomes curiously involved in these things. But you must realise, joking apart, that she's the only possible wife for Henry.'

'I never interfere,' said Mr Adams expansively, 'with an Artist, a Creator.' His terrible geniality was fortified by the beer. He was Pop Brick plus. 'By all means, old boy, if you have set your heart on it, let Henry marry Caroline; but answer me this one question first: *What are you going to do with Irene if he does?*'

'I thought perhaps I'd let her gradually fade out.'

'Fade out? My dear chap! Has it ever occurred to you to wonder why ten million people switch on every evening at 8.30?'

'It's only nine million now.'

'All right; it'll be only five million if we don't watch our step. They switch on their radios, as I was saying, because they have taken Us to their hearts. We are much more real to them than some of their own families are. They are interested—*passionately*, old boy—in all the details of our work and play. The daily round, the common task! Why, only last week I met a man who worked in the Ministry of Food. He told me that after all these years people were beginning at last to learn the facts about rationing simply through listening to what goes on over *my* counter. I'm a modest man, I hope; but it makes you think.' Mr Adams puffed at his pipe and wore his Simple-Simon look. 'It's the same with Irene. They have taken her to their hearts. Every evening at 8.30 they are on tenterhooks to know, among other things, what happens to Irene. And you talk airily of *letting her fade out!*'

'Could we marry her off to someone else, do you think?' suggested Tomlinson.

Mr Adams pondered. 'Possible,' he said at last, 'but risky; and it would take time. The Public mistrusts hasty marriages, and you know why! No, there's only one way out, as I see it.'

'What's that?'

Mr Adams, full of beer, beamed like his own picture on the packet of self-raising flour. 'I'm a simple chap, but I know my Public,' he said. 'I daresay it's being a simple chap, and knowing my Public, that has got me where I am. Therefore I tell you flat that there's only one way to get rid of Irene. You must alienate her, somehow or other, from the Public's

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

affections; and that, Mister Creator, will take some doing, I assure you. You must *change her nature* and *turn them against her*, if you see what I mean. In other words, you must make her beastly, old boy. Make her simply *beashly!*' beamed Mr Adams, as he finished his beer.

TOMLINSON soon discovered that the process of making Irene beastly was by no means as simple as it sounded. She was a pretty silly and tiresome girl, in his opinion, already; so he started off by emphasising all her silly and tiresome characteristics. For instance, she was mad on the pictures; so he caused her to chatter-chatter about film-stars more stupidly than ever, only to discover that millions of listeners shared her taste. She was crazy about dancing; so he sent her off three times a week to the Palais in the near-by town—with the result that a new kind of bebop was immediately christened Irene's Jive. She was horribly refained; he made her more so; and Irene's fan-mail, which she took care to show him, began to congratulate her on speaking ever so nice. 'Much nicer,' added several of her fans, 'than that hoity-toity, stuck-up Caroline.'

Of course, Tomlinson should have realised by now that he was butting his head against a Brick wall, as Mr Adams put it. Mr Adams was always making puns like that. But Tomlinson was obstinate; and Caroline, remember, meant much more to him than a mere character in his story; she enshrined that ridiculous daydream of his boyhood, and it is for the sake of such phantoms of the mind that men will fight most foolhardily. 'For goodness' sake be *practical*, old boy,' Mr Adams begged him; for Mr Adams, who was very practical indeed, saw his still-unsigned film-contract vanishing into limbo. But it was no good. Tomlinson clung to Caroline, and by now she was quoting Keats, which, said Mr Adams, would cost about a hundred thousand listeners per quotation. It did; and in vain Miss Crowhurst's dying-duck look reproached Tomlinson as she extended the plunging green line on the graph above her desk. In vain Mr Adams warned him: 'See the red light, old boy, before it's too late.' In vain, at the party which celebrated the five-hundredth episode, did almost the whole cast hint to him that the best jobs they'd ever had were likely to be cast away for the sake of his private whim.

It was an extremely gloomy celebration, more like a farewell party, in fact, for the latest figures from Listener Research showed a drop of half-a-million in a week. Caroline stayed away; she said she had a headache. But Irene was there in a new hat, having just opened a Conservative fête for a fee of twenty-five guineas.

Irene had bought four new hats, and opened at least half-a-dozen fêtes, within the last month or so; but poor Caroline's fan-mail consisted mostly of abuse, and it was this Human Factor, as Mr Adams described it, which now crept in to complicate the situation. For Caroline had suddenly lost her nerve. She was a nice girl, only just out of the RADA, and until a few weeks ago she had cherished fond hopes of making her name on the wireless. She had taken her part as seriously, and worked as hard at it, as if she were rehearsing Juliet for the Old Vic; but, alas, her only reward seemed to be anonymous letters, half of which described her as stuck-up and the other half as no-better-than-she-should-be. She was somewhat ingenuous, and so took them seriously; she began to approach each episode with increasing terror. Her nervousness had the extraordinary effect of imparting to the most innocent of her speeches uncomfortable shades of meaning, dark implications, a sort of nuance of naughtiness. Tomlinson, however, failed to notice this. Perhaps he was too familiar with the lines he had written and with the harmless intention behind them. Perhaps he was too concerned with another Human Factor—the problem of Irene.

Now Irene, as an actress, was much tougher and more experienced than Caroline. Moreover, though she was rather stupid in most other respects, she was sharper than needles where her own interests were threatened. She quickly got wind that she was liable to play herself out of the programme, and she therefore contrived to speak even her nastiest lines in such honeyed tones that everybody loved her—and, what was much more dangerous, pitied her as well! Tomlinson sent her out with a succession of new boy-friends; poor child, she was only consoling herself for Henry's infidelity. He recklessly caused her to drink too many gin-and-limes; the episode cost him another hundred thousand listeners, a Grand Remonstrance from the Temperance organisations, and a sharp reproof from his Director; but nobody blamed Irene—that Caroline had driven her to it, and no wonder!

RAISE NO MORE SPIRITS . . .

So it went on, and day after day Irene minced up to the microphone to deliver her lines with a shrug of sweet resignation; and every jilted maiden from Wigan to Weymouth shared her martyrdom.

It was on one of these occasions, towards the end of a particularly exasperating rehearsal, that the idea of murder suddenly entered Tomlinson's mind. Irene was saying to Henry: 'There are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it,' after which she was supposed to Flounce Away, and that would have been the beginning of the end for Irene. He had chosen the phrase with some care, not only because he thought it was just the right kind of cliché for Irene, but also because it would surely be impossible to speak it with any hint of tenderness. But Irene rose to the challenge. She sighed gently; and then with a little catch in her breath she managed to imply that those desirable fishes were for other nets than hers. For herself, she seemed to say, there was but a long vista of the limitless ocean, empty as the cruel sky. She was a mermaid lamenting on a sea-drenched rock. Swim away, my Henry, desert me if you must. I would not stay you even if I could. Follow your own sweet will. Beloved fish of a Henry, farewell.

At last Tomlinson could bear it no longer. 'For heaven's sake,' he almost shouted, 'put a little *life* into it!'

'*Life*? Oh, Ay thought Ay was mint to be *resaigned*.' She spoke the line again, and a suggestion that all was not yet over somehow crept into it. Swim away, but do not forget me. You will always be the only fish for me. My beautiful bait will still be waiting for you if you decide to return.

Tomlinson simply hated her. He was so angry he could have slapped her face. And then, all at once, the solution came to him in a flash. Why the devil hadn't he thought of it before? *The obvious way to get rid of Irene was to bump her off!*

HE sat up half the night writing the last episode. For the first time since Caroline's entrance into the story had briefly quickened his pen he wrote with real enjoyment. The accident was a gory one, for the motor-cycle on which Irene was riding pillion, returning, of course, from an evening at the Palais, collided head-on with a double-decker bus. Tomlinson would have liked to finish off his victim then and there, but eight

million listeners demanded suspense, so he sent her off to the Cottage Hospital in an ambulance, moribund but still conscious, and during a peculiarly pleasant half-hour, just before he went to bed, roughed out the subsequent episode, in which she would breathe her last.

Being presented with her script two days later, Irene read it demurely, raised her eyebrows, but made no comment other than: 'Poor little me.' During rehearsal she was exceptionally quiet and thoughtful; at the recording she spoke her lines with the air of one who knows quite well that there is arsenic in her tea, but drinks it gladly, as a release from the wickedness of the world.

The programme went out at 8.30 on the following evening and by 9 o'clock every telephone to the BBC was blocked, the girls on the switchboard were frantic, and Miss Crowhurst and Miss Pegley had to be recalled from their remote suburbs to deal with hundreds of anxious inquiries. As non-committal as hospital nurses, they replied to each that Irene was poorly, and tried in vain to get through to Tomlinson, but there was no reply from his flat. They could not guess that just round the corner in the local he was heartlessly, and, as it happened, prematurely, celebrating the death of Irene.

He arrived at the office next morning half-an-hour late, and found it as full of flowers as a film-star's sickroom. Miss Crowhurst and Miss Pegley glanced up reproachfully from among the carnations and lilies. Embowered at their desks, the two young typists shrugged their shoulders apologetically and pointed to the floor, where bouquets bearing labels such as '*For our darling Irene, with fondest love*' were piled almost knee-deep. Nobody had dared to put any flowers on Tomlinson's desk, but there were heaps of telegrams. Messenger-boys came and went. Tomlinson stared about him, gradually taking it all in. At last he said, in a tone of genuine awe: 'Miss Crowhurst, are all these flowers really for Irene's funeral?'

'*Funeral*? Of course not. They're just to cheer her up, I suppose. She isn't dead yet, is she?'

'She will be, after to-night's transmission,' said Tomlinson grimly.

Miss Crowhurst looked at him hard. 'From what the Director said, I don't think to-night's transmission will go out, Mr Tomlinson. He wants to see you sharp at 10.30. Pop Brick's been in and is coming back. Also

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

Caroline. There's a general flap on.' She broke off to answer the insistent telephone. 'No, I'm afraid you must wait for the next episode. . . . No, I really can't tell you whether Irene is going to recover. . . .'

There was certainly a general flap. Mr Adams blew in and out. He declared that he had his finger on the Public Pulse. The Public was upset, there was no doubt about it. You couldn't flout Public Opinion. Where would we be, he asked, if it weren't for the Public? He trampled with elephantine feet on a bunch of white gladioli and announced dogmatically: 'There is no question, of course, but that Irene will recover. Have you got in touch with a good surgeon yet?'

Tomlinson looked at him helplessly. Had he, too, entered that immense loony-bin, as Tomlinson saw it, which existed beyond the microphone, beyond the transmitter? Or was he merely being facetious? But Mr Adams was perfectly serious and, as it turned out, quite sensible too.

'You've made such a mess of that poor girl,' Mr Adams said, 'that it'll take a major operation to put her right. You can't risk a mistake about the details. You know how critical the Public is, especially about medical matters. Everybody seems to know the difference between a tibia and a fibula nowadays, except me. Take my tip, old boy, and consult a good surgeon. Nothing less than Harley Street for our Irene!'

No sooner had Mr Adams gone than Caroline appeared. She laid a handful of letters on the desk in front of Tomlinson, and immediately burst into tears. Adding to the confusion, she couldn't find a handkerchief and Miss Pegley had to lend her one. Tomlinson in utter bewilderment was trying to read the top letter, which was written on cheap paper with a scratchy pen in an exclamatory style, thus: 'Foxgloves!! Squirrels!!! We know what you mean, Miss Hoity-toity Caroline, when you invite Henry to go for a walk in the wood to look at the *foxgloves!* and the *squirrels!!!!*'

But that was as far as Tomlinson had got when the telephone rang again and Miss Crowhurst said urgently: 'The Director's back from his meeting, Mr Tomlinson. He wants to see you *immediately*, please.'

Crowhurst typed the sheets as he handed them to her; Miss Pegley took the typescript from Miss Crowhurst, read it avidly, and made the appropriate entries in her card-index. But most of the time they had nothing to do but powder their noses, for the writing went slowly, and Tomlinson's reluctant pen lagged like a ploughman's clay-caked boots at the end of a weary day. He had snatched back Irene from the very jaws of death more than a week ago; indeed, he had had no choice, for the Director, all smiles, had actually congratulated him on the commotion he had caused. 'It isn't very many of us who can touch the Public's imagination as you have done,' he had said. 'Headlines in the papers even—"*Will Irene live or die?*" I daresay you'll gain another two million listeners during her long convalescence. . . . *Dead*, you say—in the next episode? Nonsense, my dear chap; you'd better hurry back to your desk and resurrect her quickly!'

Then the Director had given him a cigarette and ushered him to the door. 'You haven't got very long, as you'll have to re-record that episode before 8.30. Oh, by the way, you want to be a bit careful, I think, about your treatment of Caroline. I'm afraid I'm not a very faithful listener, but we've had a lot of letters, you know, and I had the recording played over to me this morning. That stuff about foxgloves and squirrels—just a *shade* suggestive, don't you think? If I were you I'd just—*ease* her out of the programme gently. . . .'

In the corridor on the way back to the office Tomlinson had met Mr Adams. 'We're re-recording at three,' Tomlinson said shortly.

Mr Adams beamed. 'I thought so. Ah well.' Then he made one of his awful puns. 'We might call this little incident *Dropping a Brick*, mightn't we?' He put his fat hand on Tomlinson's arm. 'But at any rate it's taught us one thing. One can't fly in the face of the Public, old boy.'

But Tomlinson hated and despised the Public. "'*You common cry of curs!*'" he said to himself, as he slogged away at Episode 519. He had produced *Coriolanus* last year.

"'*You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate
As reek o' the rotten fens, whose loves I prize
As the dead carcasses of unburied men
That do corrupt my air. . .*'"

That's apt, that's good. "*That do corrupt my air.*"

A FORTNIGHT later Tomlinson sat late in his office writing Episode 519. Miss
456

PORTRAIT OF A HOTEL

Meanwhile he scribbled hard. He was nearly at the end of the episode now. It was his great betrayal. He had got rid of Caroline.

He heard Miss Crowhurst say: 'I did like Irene's hat this afternoon, that flimsy one with the tulle on it.'

'Yes. She'd been crowning a Carnival Queen,' said Miss Pegley.

Tomlinson wrote his last sentence, and felt like Judas. It was Mr Adams who had suggested to him that the only way to get rid of Caroline was to foist on her some mean little despicable crime. 'No more motor-accidents, old boy, and above all nothing glamorous or tragic, if you see what I mean—or you'll have the Public on her side suddenly, and what the devil will you do about that?'

Miserably, Tomlinson threw the sheet across to Miss Crowhurst. 'There you are.

Type it, please, and then we've done,' he said.

A messenger-boy came in and put a slip on Miss Crowhurst's desk. She looked at it and smiled. Then she picked up her green pencil and stood up to reach the graph. 'Look,' she said, as she drew the green line. 'Up and up! Isn't it wonderful?' The green line intersected the red one now, and mounted high above it. 'We've passed *The Wilkinsons*, we're leading them by three million. Up and up!' She glanced significantly at Miss Pegley. 'And I know why,' she added softly.

Miss Pegley smiled back, nodded, and wrote meticulously upon Caroline's card: Episode 519. *Robs till in shop. Caught red-handed by Pop Brick. . . . Henry's reconciliation with Irene. . . .* And with an air of finality she drew a neat line at the bottom of Caroline's card and put it away in the card-index.

September First Story: *Seaweed in the Hair* by H. W. Sutherland.

Portrait of a Hotel

Past and Present at the Monte Rosa

CICELY WILLIAMS

'THE mountaineer's true home'—that is how the famous alpinist C. E. Matthews described the Monte Rosa hotel at Zermatt in 1870. The description applies equally well to-day.

There are—or were—many hotels scattered about the world which, through long association, have come to be regarded as something more than mere hotels: Shepherds in Cairo—now, alas, no more—where everyone always met someone whom he knew; the King David in Jerusalem, the European rendezvous of the Middle East until politics made it so inaccessible. But there is no hotel in the world so dear to the heart of many thousands of British

people as the Monte Rosa. Most mountain-lovers, and surely every mountaineer, must have stayed there at some time; and thousands who would make no claim to membership of the alpine fraternity have heard of that indissoluble trinity—Zermatt, the Matterhorn, and the Monte Rosa hotel.

Until the early days of the 19th century there were no mountain-lovers and no mountaineers. Mountains were regarded with dread, even by those who dwelt among them. No one would have dreamt of visiting the Alps for pleasure, and mountaineering, as a sport, only became popular during the 1850's. All the great climbing centres have developed

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

during the last hundred years, and the Monte Rosa is the oldest of all the climbing hotels.

IN 1839 Dr Lauber, the village physician of Zermatt, who had been in the habit of taking a few guests in his chalet, obtained permission to open it as an inn. The chalet was next to the Vicarage, which stood then where it stands to-day, and that chalet is incorporated in the present Monte Rosa hotel. Guests who to-day pay their bills in the bureau, read their papers in the smoking-room, or occupy those bedrooms immediately over these rooms are, in fact, using the apartments of the original tiny inn.

Dr Lauber's inn had three beds and accommodated about a dozen travellers a year. Its fame spread rapidly and the British, who were already beginning to be fascinated by Zermatt, came in increasing numbers. Men famous in many walks of life, and from many parts of Europe, put their names in the Visitors' Book. Desor, the well-known scientist from Neuchâtel, found the little Monte Rosa exactly to his liking; Rodolphe Toepffer, author of *Voyages en Zigzag*, arrived one summer with a large party of schoolboys; soon after this came John Ball, later President of the Alpine Club; and in 1844 Ruskin arrived for the first of many visits.

The little inn was already making history, but greater things lay in store. In 1855 Lauber's inn was taken over by Alexander Seiler of Brigue, who christened it *Hôtel Monte Rosa*—quite unaware that in later years his name would have a magic meaning among the hôteliers of Europe. By this act the great Seiler dynasty of hotelkeepers was founded and the popularity of the Monte Rosa was established for all time. Moreover, the development of Zermatt as a first-class resort was assured.

BY this time alpinism was getting into its stride, and the best climbers of the day, including the great British pioneers, were meeting at the Monte Rosa. For a few weeks every summer the hotel catered for about eighty guests—all of them alpinists with their womenfolk.

Seiler was the *hôtelier par excellence*. He understood exactly the art of innkeeping. He knew just how best to cater for the comfort of the mountaineer; how to welcome the

arriving guests, thirsting for more conquests; how to bid farewell to the successful and the disappointed. No one was merely a room-number to Seiler—each visitor was his personal guest. He entertained them to wine and always sat at the head of the long dining-table, he himself giving the sign for the beginning and ending of the meal. César Ritz, of hotel fame, began his career as a waiter at the Monte Rosa, and legend has it that it was his days of running from end to end of the lengthy Seiler table that caused him to introduce small individual tables in his own hotels!

Between 1855 and 1865 almost all the major peaks in the Zermatt district were climbed for the first time—in each case by guests from the Monte Rosa. The entries in the hotel registers for these years make interesting reading, for the guests record not only their famous first ascents, but also their impressions of the hotel.

In an entry for 1858 one gentleman, having described his ascents at some length, concludes with a eulogy of the Seilers, which, however, did not prevent his mentioning that 'the chops were tough.' In 1859 Leslie Stephen records that he made the first ascent of the Rimpfischhorn; this he achieved by starting from the hotel, since there was no Fluhalp Hut in those days. Another visitor, in July 1863, requested that 'ladies and gentlemen ascending the Gornergrat should not throw down stones on the heads of those coming up the Gadmen path after a major ascent.'

Little coteries of climbers arrived every year at the Monte Rosa, among them E. S. Kennedy, the Smyth brothers, Hinchcliffe, Wills, Tyndall, the Buxtons, Edward Whymper, and, as already indicated, Leslie Stephen, who, a few years later, was to meet there Thackeray's daughter, who afterwards became his wife.

ANY true portrait of the Monte Rosa hotel must include a reference to the first ascent of the Matterhorn and to the disastrous accident which occurred on the descent, for it was from the Monte Rosa that the party set out, and it was to the Monte Rosa that Edward Whymper, the sole British survivor, returned.

The story, which has all the elements of a Greek tragedy, is well known. For no other mountain in the world had there been such a long and passionate struggle. On 14th July

PORTRAIT OF A HOTEL

1865 Edward Whymper and his British party of Hudson, Hadow, and Lord Francis Douglas, with the two Taugwalders of Zermatt and Michel Croz of Chamonix as guides, succeeded in reaching the summit. On the descent, just above the shoulder of the Matterhorn, a slip occurred; the rope broke and Croz, Hudson, Hadow, and Douglas fell to their deaths on the glacier 6000 ft below.

So unnerved were the two Taugwalders, that they had not reached the base of the mountain when night fell. Whymper remained with them on the ridge and at daybreak escorted them down to safety. Then he went on alone to Zermatt. Seiler met him at the door of the Monte Rosa; in silence he followed Whymper to his room. 'What is the matter?' he inquired anxiously.

Whymper turned and answered him slowly: 'The Taugwalders and I have returned.'

Seiler understood—and burst into tears.

Temporarily, the Matterhorn accident had a bad effect on alpinism; Queen Victoria even inquired if climbing could not be stopped altogether. But mountaineering had come to stay, and by 1870 the Monte Rosa could report a larger number of guests than ever before.

DURING the next thirty years the Monte Rosa hotel was still the favourite summer meeting-place of that generation of British alpinists. Mummery, Norman Collie, Lord Conway, Edward Broome, A. W. Moore, W. C. Slingsby, Sir Edward Davidson, Ellis Carr, Wilson, Wicks, Bradley, Charles Pasteur, and many others could always be found there. Each day they set forth on some big expedition and in the evenings they sat in the old *salon* and reported the day's doings. A little later than these, but none the less famous, was Charles Woolaston, whose devotion to the place was such that he was always the last to leave the Monte Rosa. Indeed, the people of Zermatt could hardly settle down for the winter until he had helped to fold the blankets and lock the door.

This was also the day of the great women mountaineers: Miss Lucy Walker, who climbed in a crinoline until the village was left behind, and, in 1871, was the first woman to climb the Matterhorn; Mrs Mummery, who, with her famous husband, made the first ascent of the Teufelsgrat on the Taeschorn; and last, but not least, Mrs Aubrey Le Blond,

the first President of the Ladies' Alpine Club. This intrepid lady traversed the Zinal Rothorn from Zermatt nearly down to Zinal and then discovered that her skirt had been left on the summit. She insisted on going all the way back for it and finally descended to the Monte Rosa hotel for the night! All these adventurous women were to be found at the hotel, joining in the evening discussions as far as was deemed suitable in those days.

In 1889 the Seiler family built the hotel on the Riffelalp, 2000 ft above Zermatt. It was before the days of telephones, so if Seiler wished to discover if there was room at the Riffelalp for some fresh arrival, he used to signal from the roof of the Monte Rosa with a sheet. He would wave the sheet inquiringly and by way of reply a white or black flag was waved from the windows of the Riffelalp signifying 'Yes' or 'No.'

In the 1880's Zermatt was still a tiny, rather dirty place with few shops; but the English church, 'the parish church of the Alpine Club,' was already established, and the Monte Rosa hotel played the part of Rectory—as it still does to-day—keeping the keys and making itself responsible for the cleaning of the church.

Very occasionally a British guest would appear at the Monte Rosa in the winter—a great event for the whole village. Sydney Spencer, who made the first winter ascent of the Dom in January 1894, found, on his return, the entire village band assembled in front of the hotel to celebrate his triumph. In 1891 the mountain-railway from Visp reached Zermatt, and once again the Monte Rosa needed to expand to cope with the influx of visitors.

WITH the turn of the century new and famous climbers appeared at the hotel—Lord Schuster, Winthrop Young, R. L. G. Irving, Sir Arnold Lunn, and, of course, Mr L. S. Amery, who, in course of time, became President of the Alpine Club and President of the Ski Club of Great Britain. It is Mr Amery who tells the story that Winston Churchill once joined the party of alpine enthusiasts and insisted on climbing Monte Rosa because it was the highest mountain in Switzerland. Unfortunately, he suffered so badly from mountain-sickness and sunburn that he never climbed again!

Edward Whymper still came to Zermatt. Always a difficult man, he did not mellow with

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

the years, and he sat sullenly in his wicker chair outside the Monte Rosa—stern and unapproachable. Nevertheless, Whymper has become a legend at Zermatt—particularly at the Monte Rosa—and it is the days of his great achievements that people like to remember.

In the period that followed the First World War no new peaks remained to be climbed, but new records were still being set up by guests from the Monte Rosa, especially by women. In 1925 Eileen Jackson, aged fifteen, climbed the Matterhorn with one guide in what was then record time. When she returned to the hotel for dinner at night all the guests in the dining-room raised their glasses in her honour. In 1931 the American Miriam O'Brien and her friend Alice Damesme mounted mules outside the Monte Rosa and rode up to the Matterhorn Hut and the next day made the second guideless ascent of the Matterhorn by women.

The great epic climb of the 1930's was undoubtedly the ascent of the north face of the Matterhorn by the Bavarian brothers Franz and Toni Schmid. The Seiler family acclaimed the event with all their traditional hospitality; celebrations at the Monte Rosa and in Zermatt lasted for nearly a fortnight and culminated in a banquet to which the leading climbers of all nationalities were invited. In 1925 a bronze medallion-portrait of Whymper had been placed on the wall of the Monte Rosa and a lasting memorial of the Schmid's climb is a picture of Franz and Toni taken against the background of the Whymper plaque.

The most striking guest at the Monte Rosa hotel during these years was, of course, Frank Smythe, who became as famous in his generation as Whymper had been seventy years before. Sometimes he came to climb alone, as, for example, when he followed Leslie Stephen by climbing the Rimpfischhorn direct from the hotel. Sometimes he came looking for likely climbers for the Everest expeditions; but always the other guests sensed that here was someone worthy to rank with the giants of old.

AND what of the Monte Rosa in the present post-war, atomic age? *Plus ça change* . . . It is still yesterday, to-day, and for ever—the Monte Rosa. The old dining-room, with its lighting so reminiscent of a ship, remains unchanged. The leading alpinists

still occupy the tables by the windows at the top of the room. The smoking-room has been redecorated, but the historic photographs still cover the walls. The quaint old tiled stove still heats the lounge. A good many of the bedrooms have fixed basins, running water, and modern furnishings, but Whymper's bedroom and the rest of the original rooms remain cosy and old-fashioned—fragrant with imperishable memories.

On the famous Guides' Wall opposite the hotel the guides still sit in their spare time, smoking their pipes—the modern giants as great in their generation as their mighty predecessors, worthy successors of heroic fathers and grandfathers.

And the great Seiler tradition of kindness and hospitality continues, entirely untarnished by the passing of the years. The present manageress of the Monte Rosa, herself a member of the Seiler family, is always at the porch to welcome her guests; no mountaineer leaves for a climb without some of the staff assembling to wish him good luck; and no one returns, however late the hour, without finding someone to attend to his needs. Regular guests at the hotel will sometimes find a bowl of fruit in their rooms when they arrive, and for those, especially children, who are fortunate enough to have a birthday while at the Monte Rosa, the chef will often produce the most amazing birthday-cake.

There are changes, of course, since the early years. Not all the guests to-day are mountaineers, and perhaps the costumes of some seem reminiscent of the Riviera rather than of the mountains. But the wicker chairs, where Whymper and the pioneers once relaxed, are still ranged in front of the hotel, occupied to-day by famous alpinists of the present generation, by enthusiastic beginners, and, not less honourably, by true mountain-lovers.

The old *salon* of the Monte Rosa, the scene of so many famous gatherings, is still a meeting-place for great occasions. Quite recently a dinner took place there in honour of Edward Whymper's daughter, a member of the Ladies' Alpine Club and an even greater climber than her famous father. The guests included Whymper's grandson; the grandson of the younger Taugwalder who accompanied Whymper on the Matterhorn in 1865; and the Netherlands Ambassador to Moscow, who was Whymper's companion when he set out on his last walk from the hotel. There were also present the chief guide of Zermatt, re-

representatives of the Alpine Club and the Ladies' Alpine Club, and the Chaplain of the English church at Zermatt. The spirits of the pioneers and the kindly presence of Alexander

Seiler hovered benevolently over that gathering—'You, too, may speak with noble ghosts'—for at the Monte Rosa the past and the present are for ever one.

Pelorus Jack

New Zealand's Famous Dolphin Pilot

GEORGE M. FOWLDS

NEARLY fifty years ago New Zealand, at the same time that she was attracting attention because of the enactment of advanced social legislation, created world-wide interest on account of a Government decree affording protection to one particular fish living, only fifty miles from Wellington, the capital city, in a stretch of Cook Strait, which, it may be recalled, separates the North and South Islands. The existence of the fish had been familiar to Europeans from about 1870, and the Maoris of the near-by district declared that they had known of the fish for generations and that prior to the arrival of the white man it had guided their great war-canoes and had been under the protection of certain chiefs; but the Maoris have such intricate legends, especially concerning mythical Taniwhas (sea-serpents) and deities, that it is difficult at this date to decide whether their statements should be regarded as fact or as fiction. Pelorus Jack, as the fish was called, became even more famous than that semi-mysterious white whale, which is described in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* as creating such terror and damage. It may be of interest, therefore, to supply some details of this singular and lonely fish, for he was never seen in the company of other fish.

IN the Government Gazette the fish—always spoken of as 'he,' though its sex was not

known—was described as a Risso's dolphin (*Grampus griseus*) and was said to be about fourteen feet long, of a bluish-white colour, tinged with purple and yellow, and with flippers, dark in hue and mottled in grey.

By his uncommon habit of meeting at special points steamers running between Wellington and Nelson and accompanying them for a certain distance along a regular route the fish occasioned so much interest that many passengers made the trip just to get a look at him. By some uncanny instinct, Pelorus Jack met most steamers at any hour of the day or night at Pelorus Sound and like a pilot led the way through the tortuous channels of the natural fiord known as the French Pass. The sleep of hundreds of people was interrupted to see this fish gambolling around the boat's bows, and dozens of photographs must have been taken of him.

Pelorus Jack's obvious friendliness did not, however, deter alleged sporting passengers, and even some ship's officers, from taking pot-shots at him with guns. Realising the remarkable interest that Pelorus Jack had aroused, and in order to prevent the loss of this harmless denizen of the deep, an official of the newly-created Tourist Department, the Rev. D. C. Bates, first proposed in 1904 a Government prohibition against his killing or capture. Accordingly, under a general Act of Parliament, an Order in Council was made and proclaimed for a period of five

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

years, imposing a minimum fine of £5 and a maximum of £100 for attempts on the life of this fish. The prohibition assumed a more permanent form in September 1911, when it was extended for an unlimited period. It should be pointed out that in this instance Parliament did not pass a special bill to afford protection, but use was made of an enabling act already on the statute-book, which generally provided protection for special flora and fauna, and nothing the Government did was in any way freakish.

THAT the steps taken were justified was proved six years later, in 1917, for, without anyone knowing the reason, Pelorus Jack failed to appear on his regular piloting journey. His disappearance was received with

many expressions of regret by those who had seen him and also by others who had only read or heard of him. Whether his absence was due to old age or to being killed by a fishing party is not known. It was said that a Norwegian whaler was operating near New Zealand waters at the time, but it is doubtful if this ship would have bothered to destroy such a small and, from a commercial standpoint, useless fish.

Curiously enough, in March 1945 another fish, a porpoise, appeared regularly at the entrance to Pelorus Sound and the Government immediately enacted a special Order in Council protecting it. Unfortunately, however, after a few months of public notice by a number of fishing parties this successor to Pelorus Jack ceased to be reported in the news.

The Old Doctor

*With healing hands
And cunning fingers that sensed through skin the secret
Failings of flesh and bone
He prunes the espaliered apple and the quince,
And knows which buds will open to rosy knuckles of flower
And set to fruit
Streaked red and gold as his bee-freaked gillyflowers.*

*For the bees know him,
And will settle on his brown, gnarled hands as quietly
As on the lips of flowers.
His honey, the green lime-essence, and the golden
Heart of broom, and that sweetened and spiced by thyme,
Glows in the sun
In jars that are jewels and hold the summer's self.*

*And his cool eye,
Kind as the speedwell, keen as the winter-blue
Shadows on frost or snow,
Judges, rejects, appraises. The sunburnt labourer,
Tossing the loaded sheaves like leaves over his shoulder,
Is to him still
The child with an angry voice like a young rook,*

*And furious face
Like a crumpled crimson petal. All round, the lives
He tended bloom and bless
Him, with the peaches he grafted under the wall,
His living memorial, sunburnt cheeks and the bright
Apple whose glow
Warms even the winds that strip the pliant tree.*

MARGARET STANLEY-WRENCH.



My Irishmen

T. BEDFORD FRANKLIN

EVERY spring for twenty-five years father had a letter from Connemara saying: 'Jimmy and Martin and me are ready to come if you will send the cost, Thomas O'Connor.' So a postal order for the fare and a bit over was duly sent, and on a Friday evening a week later Thomas O'Connor, Martin O'Connor, and James Murtagh walked up from Roade station to our farm at Shutlanger to begin their five months' stay with us to help in the hay and corn harvests.

Tommy, Martin, and Jimmy, as they were known to us children, were all part of our childhood, and we gladly welcomed old friends when we found the door of the little house at the end of the cartshed open, smoke rising again from its chimney, and the hens already foraging in and out to see what they could pick up. After reporting their safe arrival and giving father his annual present of a small bottle of Irish whiskey, they spent Saturday in putting the little house to rights. Three straw beds had to be got ready, wood and sticks cut and coal collected, milk and oatmeal and potatoes drawn from us and bacon and other groceries bought in the village.

HOW different our three Irishmen were, and yet how alike in kindness to us all.

Jimmy was short and dark, with a twinkle in his eye that unfailingly called all children and animals, and I suspect all women, to him. He was the obvious spare shepherd, cowman, and cattleman to take over from the regular men when they went on their summer holiday. He could still catch a rabbit or hare in their form or a squatting partridge in the long grass by falling full-length upon them without warning and then producing a rather flattened and surprised catch from beneath him.

It was Jimmy who found me one day at the garden-gate looking sadly at my toy cart, which had a broken wheel. I had taken out the horse and harnessed our cat Skiddy in its place, and all had gone well until a strange dog had suddenly appeared in the garden. Then Skiddy bolted and tried to climb the nearest apple-tree and take the cart with her, but the harness came off and the cart fell and broke its wheel. When I had chased the dog out of the garden and rescued Skiddy from the apple-tree, I met Jimmy. He said at once that he would ask the village carpenter to see what he could do about the wheel, and he carried the cart away with him. And, sure enough, a week later he brought back my cart, not only mended but transformed into a tipping cart, so that I could tip my load wherever I wished. So I was better off than before, and for all

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

this the carpenter would only accept sixpence, for country craftsmen were like that.

Martin was lame and was in his element as loader on the wagon or builder on the rick, where his lameness was no handicap. No load of hay or corn needed roping if Martin had built it, nor did his stacks need propping up to prevent them from settling unevenly. And after he had made the stacks Martin thatched them; from the foundations to the thatch he was responsible for the many stacks of our hay and corn harvest.

Tommy was big and fair, the undoubted leader of the trio. There was nothing in farm work he could not do and he was expert at hoeing turnips and pitching heavy sheaves to the top of a loaded wagon. He was a lover of horses and he and the wagoner were firm friends. Yet Tommy, big and strong as he was, was very shy and gentle with women and children. Every week he came to the garden and mother piled his arms full of vegetables for the little house, talking to him of his wife and children in far-off Connemara. Though he was bound up in his family and his home, he idolised mother, and it was Tommy who walked three miles on a wet and windy night to fetch the doctor when she was suddenly taken ill. When father decided I was old enough to begin to learn farming, it was into Tommy's hands I was consigned, for both my parents knew that I should come to no harm with Tommy to teach and look after me.

IT was hay-time when I had my first lesson, and Tommy showed me how to turn a half-made swath of hay with a hay-rake without a lot of unnecessary movements. In his hands the whole swath behaved like a pack of cards and it was fascinating to see the turning movement run down the swath as he progressed down the row. To my delight, I found I could imitate him very soon, and this initial success made me keen to keep up my reputation as a good pupil.

When the time came for carrying the hay I was put in charge of the wagons and horses and it was my job to get the loaded wagons safely to the rickyard and the empty wagons from the rick to the field without delay. Tommy gave me one bit of invaluable advice before I began; this was to let the horses show me the proper way to do things if I was in doubt, because they knew much more about the operation than I did. And, in fact, the

horses soon showed me how a heavy-loaded wagon must approach the gateway so as to pass through safely without knocking down a gate-post. And the trace-horse which helped to pull the load up the hill to the rickyard and was unhooked at the rickyard gate showed me on the return journey with the empty wagon that his proper place was to follow the wagon and not be hooked on in front of the shaft-horse as I had half-thought of doing. Tommy's advice saved me from making a fool of myself many times that first day.

My next lesson showed me that I was not so clever as I was beginning to think. Try as I would, I could not pick up Tommy's method of singling turnips, which worked so fast and neatly with him, but only clumsily and untidily with me. Holding his hoe firmly with stiffened elbows and using the weight of his body to do all the work, he leaned forward and pushed the hoe through the row of turnips and then leaned back and drew the hoe back, leaving one well-grown turnip standing and all the rest and the weeds uprooted. So simple, speedy, and effective, and yet I just could not do it. Tommy and I started on two rows together. He reached the end of his row while I was about halfway, and then he came back down my row to meet me, and that was the best I could do. He tried to console me by saying he thought my body was too light and my hoe too heavy. But it was not that. I just could not get the knack of it.

BUT when the time came for me to learn to mow with the scythe, the wheelwright and the blacksmith in the village were consulted and together they built for me a small scythe which fitted me perfectly, so that no one could put it down to the scythe if I failed to use it properly. At first I learnt the movements of feet and hands by Tommy putting his hands over mine and his feet behind mine, so that we shuffled forward together swinging and shuffling in proper time. And it was in the lucerne field that I had my first lessons, for Tommy held that it was a great mistake to put a beginner on to soft grass, which was difficult to bite with the blade. The lucerne stalks were stiff and stood up to the scythe well and gave me a chance to get the feel of the cutting-edge of the blade.

Before he let me start on my own, he made me shut my eyes and listen to the song of his blade as he cut swath after swath, and he told

MY IRISHMEN

me to wait patiently for the moment when I, too, could make the blade sing. Twice a week Tommy and I took a horse and cart and brought a load of lucerne down to the farm for the horses and cows, and for weeks I only produced grunts and sighs out of my moving blade, until one day I suddenly called out to Tommy: 'I've got it—listen,' and he replied: 'Yes, now I can hear your blade sing. Tomorrow you shall help me mow.'

It was typical of Tommy's methods that on the morrow when we reached the field he just honed his scythe and started cutting a swath, and left me to follow suit on another behind him out of sight of the eagle-eye of my tutor. And so all my nervousness fell from me, and keeping time with Tommy ahead I began to enjoy the crisp cut of the fine-edged blade across the stalks of the lucerne and the song of the two blades in unison. Foot by foot teacher and pupil edged forward, and, as the flowering heads of the lucerne toppled, the butterflies, dizzy with nectar, rose in clouds and fluttered away in search of more sweetness. It was a wonderful moment. The steady singing swish of our blades, the scent of the flowers in the sun, and the clouds of butterflies were an intoxicating accompaniment to my first performance with the scythe. I was as nearly drunk as the butterflies when Tommy halted, looked back at our work, and said: 'You'll do, young master.'

TO me corn harvest was much the same as hay harvest and consisted of long days spent in leading horses and wagons, but to the Irishmen corn harvest was the crown of the year; hay was food for animals and so was well worth gathering, but corn was food for women and children and was a gift of God.

So to them corn harvest was a solemn rite and in good weather work went on in the harvest-field until dark. When bad weather held up the harvest there was still work connected with it to be done in the barn, where straw was pulled and straw rope made for thatching, or hazel spars cut in the wood so that Martin could get to work at once on thatching the ricks as soon as harvest was done.

And the Irishmen had a harvest-home hymn of their own, which only I of all the people at home had ever heard, for they only sang it when they thought they were alone and out of hearing of everybody. But one year I had strained my back, so that I had been off work for the last week of harvest, and the night of the harvest-home I was sitting by the brook near Willow Ford when the last load came to the ford. Only the three Irishmen were with it as the last field to be cleared was just outside the village, and all the other men had gone home leaving the Irishmen to bring the last load to the rickyard. As usual, the horses stopped for a drink at the ford, and then as they breasted the hill up to home the Irishmen burst into song. The words were in Gaelic and meant nothing to me, but the refrain was lovely, and I sat entranced as the voices and the accompanying rumble of the wagon-wheels faded into the dusk.

After harvest-home it was always something of an anticlimax. Martin set to work to thatch the ricks and Tommy and Jimmy did odd jobs, obviously marking time until the ricks were done and they could all go home to Connemara. At last the day came for packing up, because Martin had put his dolly on the last rick—a house-martin, sign-manual of his work, and a symbol that the spring would return, and Martin with it to thatch next year's ricks.

High on the Hill

*High on the hill I can see it all,
The anthill men and the doll's-house town,
The bowl of sea and the trim toy ships.
Here only the trees at hand are tall.*

*High on the hill I can touch a cloud
Or measure miles with my finger-tips,
Can hide the town with a palm turned down,
And drown its noise when I speak aloud.*

*High on the hill is all a joke,
And I wonder why I bothered at all,
With the clockwork cars so slow and small,
The tiny trains and the anthill folk.*

TOM WRIGHT.

Maestro of the Merry-Go-Rounds

Frederick Savage and the Steam Roundabout

A. J. FORREST

MOST of us are aware of something imperishably traditional about a fairground. The motif matters hardly at all, whether galloping horses are imposed upon Roman charioteers, or fire-streaking jet-planes upon a set of Venetian gondolas or pert-tailed, fashionably-gilded peacocks. But one thing matters immensely to many a staunch traditionalist—it is the bustling old traction-engine of robust British workmanship, which was once the glory of our fairgrounds. Where are they now, these gallant old-timers, multicoloured, agleam and aglitter in their superb twisted brasswork and accompanied, as often as not, by a steam-organ, blazoning forth the most delicious cacophony of wild yet cheerful sounds imaginable?

In its heyday, the great midsummer festival staged on Newcastle's Town Moor saw nearly a hundred such engines assembled in fiery competition. Their ebullient jollity almost smoked out the showground! And the connoisseur delighted in recognising some of the same stalwarts at Nottingham Goose Fair, at King's Lynn Mart, on Hampstead Heath, or as far south as Barnstaple. Wherever, in fact, his fairground fancies roved, there was this cauldron of gaiety and smoke to give them sparkle.

Yet to-day, displaced largely by the diesel-engine and electric-motor, these magnificent, always perspiring engines of fun—it seems hard to dub them mere amusement machines, as the profession does—belong to a vanished age, themselves relegated to rusty exile, if surviving at all. Happily, however, a movement is now afoot, started by a letter to *The Times*, which seeks to purchase a typical old-time fairground traction-engine, complete, I hope, with steam-organ apparatus, and present it to the Science Museum at South

Kensington. Contributions from the Government itself would not, I am told, be refused.

Until relatively modern times roundabouts circled but tamely, their motions governed by pony power or by their proprietors' muscular arms. Their youthful patrons, of course, saw them differently. Of interest, too, is the belated introduction of roundabouts from Europe to this island, fresh evidence, if any is needed, of our incorrigible insularity. For though English travellers told of merry-go-rounds on the Continent and in Arabia before 1660, the very earliest record of their appearance on home ground is contained in the *Daily Post* of 23rd August 1729. Then, as that research-zealous secretary of the Showmen's Guild, Mr Thomas Murphy, himself a former roundabout proprietor on the north-east coast, discovered, it was a minor poet, George Alexander Stevens, who thus versified some of his impressions of St Bartholomew's Fair at Smithfield:

Here's 'Whittington's Cat' and the 'Tall Dromedary,'

The 'Chaise without Horses' and 'Queen of Hungary.'

Here's the Merry-go-rounds, come who rides, come who rides, Sir?

Wine, beer, and cakes, fire-eating besides, Sir.

Precisely how this machine revolved is not known. Our poet, invaluable as an impressionist, might for posterity's sake have used his eyes even better.

The *British Magazine* of 1763 (Vol. IV, No. 50) describes a country fair, at which 'there was a roundabout for children to ride in, and all sorts of toys as at other fairs.' The earliest known print defining an English roundabout is dated 1800 and depicts the type of merry-go-

MAESTRO OF THE MERRY-GO-ROUNDS

round then in vogue at Southwark and other London fairs. It appears to be a wheelwright's invention. A massive wheel is pivoted on a centre pole, acting as the hub. Stays serve as additional supports, offsetting at an angle of about 60 degrees the horizontal spokes and meeting at a point a foot or so below the pole's top. Then, on the wheel's rim, as the Southwark print clearly illustrates, the showman had planted legless horses, on which his top-hatted and bonneted child patrons could ride literally barebacked. They rode, moreover, both smoothly and sedately. Without legs, such beasts could not possibly gallop!

The very limited resources of the roundabout proprietor, even in mid-Victorian England, were well known to 'Lord' George Sanger. In his reminiscences, *Seventy Years a Showman*, he describes 'a very primitive kind of roundabout' manufactured for his father around 1865. 'The horses were,' he records, 'enlarged examples of the rough penny toys. Their legs were simply stiff round sticks; their bodies were lumps of deal rounded on one side; their heads were roughly cut from half-inch boards, and inserted in a groove in the bodies, while the tails and manes were made up of strips of rabbit-skin. They were gaudy animals, however, their coats of paint being white, plentifully dotted with red and blue spots. Motive power was obtained from the boys at the fairs, who, having no halfpennies of their own, were always ready to push round their luckier companions for the reward of a ride later on.'

THE scene was set for an innovation in the roundabout world which was fated to transform the travelling-show business more dramatically than any other single idea since the Middle Ages. The man to whom the inspiration came could hardly have started life more humbly. Frederick Savage—let us honour his memory to-day—was born in a farm-labourer's cottage at Hevingham, near Aylsham, Norfolk, on 3rd March 1828. Yet, inauspicious as his birth must have seemed to the hard-toiling villagers, some mechanical genius of the late steam age undoubtedly presided over it. The advantages of a good schooling escaped Savage. While he should have been mastering the three R's, he was employed as a full-time rook-scarer, bringing home a much-needed two and sixpence a week.

Yet he early showed his gifts for mechanical invention, and after gaining practical experience in both the wheelwright's and blacksmith's crafts he launched himself upon a series of engineering developments—the first was a patent horse-hoe—which won him at last unstinted recognition as the travelling showfolk's prime benefactor and engineering pioneer.

At a crucial phase in their raggle-taggle story, when their trade organisation owned no prouder title than 'The Van Dwellers' Protection Society' and fierce gang-fights, waged with cudgels, knives, and broken bottles, broke out with almost clockwork regularity on many fairgrounds, Savage took the roundabout of his day and gave it power, bustle, and a wholly new magnetising appeal, summed up by one word, steam. He did not claim originality for the idea, for it seems that the very first instance of steam being applied to the fairground occurred at Marsham, the neighbouring Norfolk parish to Savage's native Hevingham, in about 1865. Then, as Savage must have known, Sidney George Soame harnessed a stationary engine to his roundabout, and drove it by a flat belt. This curiosity, styled 'a steam circus,' appeared at Aylsham Fair, but, though of novelty value, its reign was of the briefest. The flat belt, to cite one disadvantage, persisted in disengaging.

As so often happens in the story of memorable innovation, Savage's adoption of the roundabout business was almost accidental. Accustomed by this time to repairing showmen's gear of all kinds of ingenuity and crudity at his flourishing St Nicholas Engineering Works at King's Lynn, Savage was approached one day by a friend, so the story goes, who complained of his roundabout's somewhat tortoise-like performance. 'All right,' said Savage, 'I'll smarten it up for you, and drive it by steam.' By steam it went, fumingly, greedily, triumphantly. And the smoky particles thus emitted soon brightened the entire Victorian horizon.

Savage's early roundabout engines were portable, not unlike old-fashioned tar-boilers in appearance, with their centre-drive, consisting basically of a cog-wheel, crown-wheel, and pinion-wheel, geared to a larger wheel, the so-called 'cheese-wheel,' which rotated the radiating spars. Soon, eight revolutions a minute, riding on horses three abreast, represented the summit of Victorian whirligig frenzy.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

Savage's patent No. 12090 of 1885 carried this fun to new heights. It incorporated a device through which the animals, mounted on the merry-go-round's carrying wheel and so running in a trackway hidden from view, were each secured to the main wheel or axle by two cranks or eccentrics. Thus linked to the wheel's rotary motion, they jinked, simulating a bounding horse, and mighty was the joy in the creature's sprightly gallopings. Popular fancy felt tickled again when the King's Lynn maestro designed on the same principle a set of thirty platform-galloping cockerels, each bird gaudy of comb and tail.

Savage, to his credit, insisted on excellent workmanship down to the very smallest of his engine-parts, so accidents with these new power-machines, trading on a carefree, thrill-seeking public, were blessedly infrequent and minor. As his firm's catalogues show, he believed in brightly-polished parts, in brass fittings, the lagging of cylinders and boiler barrel, and the painting of the cleading to any colours or patterns specified. He was as ready to turn out steam-whistles, harmony whistles, or patent sirens as he was to build spinning-frames, 40 to 48 feet in diameter, capable of propelling some six to eight tons of human freight.

How our imaginations would be stirred if we could recover now specimens of his masterpieces, above all, those proud traction-engines known as 'Empress' and 'Enterprise.' 'Enterprise' was equipped with a turret, carrying gears suitable for driving 'top motion roundabouts' and every class of merry-go-round then known. Both engines, based on his patent No. 3937 of 1880, looked superb in their ornamental polish, spiralling supports, and gilt decorative effects. And if the 'Empress' was a queen because of her delicate facia, the 'Enterprise's' overhead-drive represented Savage, to my fancy at least, as a crowned monarch of the showgrounds.

SAVAGE'S unrivalled skill as a deviser of steam-driven roundabouts soon became a byword throughout travelling-show circles in Europe. Some of his traction-engines were exported to South Africa and Canada, as well as to Germany, France, Spain, and Italy. Furthermore, as these most conscientiously-built engines established their rollicking regimes, so the travelling-show business itself acquired a new status. Formerly some of its

practitioners tended to be as itinerant in business matters as in their travels. But since the new machines had to be handled with caution, if not with some engineering skill, in view of a happy-go-lucky, excited public's vulnerability to errors of management, showmen became almost at one leap more responsible members of society.

The quickened tempo of the fair, manifest in whirling horses or snorting dragons or grimacing dolphins amid delighted shrieks and squawks, as men, women, and children were hurled faster and faster through the air, was the measure of the revolution wrought in King's Lynn fairground-speciality factory. And the same care, devoted to mechanical details, characterised no less the carving of the horses, painting of the dragons, peacocks, gondolas, Chinese wagons, Coronation coaches, and every other riding motif of the time. 'The old man is a hard one to please.' That comment, from one of his workmen, summed up the maestro's all-pervading spirit. It caused craftsmen, some of them Italian masters of gilt and fine chiselling, to give of their best.

In recognition of his outstanding engineering skills and stout citizenship, Frederick Savage was elected Mayor of King's Lynn in 1889-90. Three years later, while he still had four years of his life to run, his friends set up his statue in the town close to the South Gate. It was the only monument to a public figure that King's Lynn had, and it is still the only one. There this patron of modern fairgrounds stands, a bearded, contemplative figure, surveying the ancient seaport to which he bequeathed an engineering firm, destined to carry the name of King's Lynn to as far-away shores as any of its ships ever glimpsed—in fact, to every corner of the world where amusement parks and fairgrounds caught the popular fancy.

Fittingly, the Lynn Mart Fair, opening on St Valentine's Day, 14th February, and one of the oldest chartered fairs in the kingdom, heralds the start of the travelling showfolk's season in our island. Then all their paraphernalia appears, some of it new, the rest the old devices freshly painted and bespangled during the short winter's respite. By this display of fresh ingenuity and fresh ornamentation, spontaneous tribute is offered, I like to believe, to that sturdy Norfolk-born original, whose skills grew to such proportions close by.

Since his day other versatile makers of

steam traction-engines and fairground equipment have risen, notably R. J. Lakin & Co. at Streatham; Lang Wheels at Hayes, Middlesex; Orton Sons and Spooners at Burton upon Trent; and in Scotland, Maxwells of Musselburgh. But none of these firms will, I am sure, dispute the right of Frederick Savage to stand as first in their field, nor disagree with me when I write that, if we are going to secure a typical

old fairground steam-engine for the nation, it should be one of the resplendent puffing giants made by the maestro himself. One monument is doubtless sufficient for any man, however distinguished, but the glittering, romantic, bustling, merry-looking contraption by which Frederick Savage revolutionised fairground scenes and customs deserves its memorial too.

Diamonds

T. J. CLOGGER

A THOUSAND years ago diamonds were worn rough or badly cut, just as they were dug out of the beds. They were then called point diamonds or ingenuous-point diamonds. Without the aid of polishers they gave forth but a faint twinkle. Later they were rubbed with their own dust, and began to reflect rays of light. Soon the lapidaries began to table-cut the stones and to give them regular facets. In 1456 Lodewijk van Berghem invented two wheels destined to perfect this method. His descendant, Robert, claimed to have found the definite cutting process, which the Dutch practised first in roses before applying it to brilliants.

When diamonds are taken from the mines or alluvial diggings they are dull and give no hint of the beauty which they later reveal after expert cutting and polishing. They have the aspect of regular and irregular crystals, in many cases showing in their depths flaws and cracks. It is a delicate and arduous task to cut and polish the diamond—a piece of eternity, born millions of years ago at extreme depths and under immense pressure in the glowing earth matrix. Man, in spite of all his inventive genius, has not been able to create a diamond, but he has succeeded in kindling the fire dormant in the rough diamond, so that it sparkles in incomparable splendour.

The rough stone often contains various impurities, such as stains, coloured spots, or flaws. All this has to be removed in order that the brilliancy of the stone shall be perfect. This is done by dividing the stone into two or more parts, depending on size, it being cleaved exactly at the spot where the imperfections which are to be removed are situated. In this way diamonds are got which, although smaller, are certainly flawless, and, in consequence, valuable.

The cutter, after a prolonged study of the stone, traces on the surface with Chinese ink the line or lines along which the stone has to be split or sawn. The expression 'cleavage' is current in crystallography. All crystal formations, to which group the diamond belongs, can be divided according to planes parallel to their surface—a process known to the trade as 'cleaving' or 'splitting.' Just like wood, crystals have a grain, in the direction of which they can easily be divided.

The diamond is split by placing a blunt blade in a precisely made incision; this divides the stone in the direction required. Diamond-splitting is done by hand and demands, in view of the immense values entailed, great experience, and even greater craftsmanship. The expert starts by graving in the stone he has to split, with the sharp edge of another

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

diamond, fixed in a holder, an incision in the direction of cleavage. To this incision a blunt blade is applied, on the back of which the splitter gives a blow with a wooden or steel mallet. Under this blow the stone falls in two pieces.

Frequently, however, it happens that it is necessary to divide a diamond in a contrary sense, just as one may have to cut wood in the direction opposite to the grain. For this, splitting is of no value and the stone has to be sawn. For sawing diamonds a material at least as hard as the diamond itself is needed, and the method is to use a disc of phosphor-bronze, very thin (5/100 to 15/100 mm.), revolving vertically. This disc really only serves to support and carry with it a paste of oil and diamond powder. This paste, together with the speed of the revolving wheel, constitutes the working material. The diamond to be cut is then fastened in steel clamps and placed against the edge of the saw, a counter-weight keeping the stone in place. The saw makes 3600 to 4000 revolutions a minute, gradually cutting the diamond through. The sawing takes either a few hours or several days, depending on the dimensions and hardness of the stone.

WHEN the splitting operation is finished, in place of the rough diamond there are several fragments into which it has been skilfully divided by cleaving or by sawing. These have to be given their definite shape before they can be polished. It is by means of cutting, in the more limited technical meaning, that the desired shape, round, oval, square, etc., is obtained, whereupon the stone is ready for polishing.

In former times cutting was done by inserting the stone in shellac adhering to a stick, and rubbing it vigorously by hand against another diamond, thus removing the sharp edges, curves, and irregularities by means of friction. The introduction of the precision-lathe eliminated this costly and time-wasting process, and to-day the workman simply has to manipulate and guide the holder in which one diamond is fixed, holding it against another one placed in a revolving wheel; the latter stone is the one being fashioned into the required shape.

By these processes the diamond loses its superfluous parts, and is cut with precision and in the best manner, having due regard to

its value in weight and brilliancy. But even at this stage it is still grey and opaque, displaying none of its lustre and sparkling fire. The next process is the polishing, whereby the stone is enabled to use fully its wonderful power of refraction, which magnifies the entering rays of light and multiplies them by the various facets so that the diamond shines and scintillates.

In the same manner as the sawing, the process of polishing can only be effected by the use of diamond. For this purpose a paste of diamond powder and oil is placed on a horizontal cast-iron disc, which makes about 2200 revolutions a minute. The stone is firmly held by being embedded in an easily-fusible solder alloy, from which it must be removed and re-set for the grinding of each facet. A later form of holder or dop is a screw-clamp which allows several facets to be ground for each setting. A total of eighteen facets is ground. The stone then passes from the lapper to the brilliandeer, who grinds the remaining forty facets, judging their portion merely by eye. The weight of the dop keeps the stone pressed against the revolving wheel; and two or three dops may be left on the same wheel for the grinding to proceed slowly. The slow grinding produces at the same time the polish on the facets. This operation continues until the stone has been completely polished. The manipulations required are numerous, as may be gleaned from the fact that brilliants, as well as certain fancy shapes, have fifty-eight facets, and very small brilliants thirty-four or eighteen facets; while roses, hardly visible, weighing about 1/5 of a milligram, still have three or nine facets, and to the naked eye are like glittering dust.

After having been polished, the diamonds, which are covered with oil and dirt, are cleaned by submerging them in boiling acid. They then display their full brilliancy and are ready for the market.

THE most famous of stones submitted to the cutter's art was the Cullinan Diamond. This massive stone was found on the 26th of January 1905 at the Premier Mine, Pretoria. It weighed in the rough 3024½ carats, about 1½ lb., and it was discovered purely by chance by the mine captain, F. Wells. It measured 4 by 2½ by 2 inches, and was purchased by the Transvaal Government in 1907 for £150,000 as a generous gift to King Edward VII.

DIAMONDS

On 23rd January 1908 this perfectly clear and colourless stone was handed over to the cutters, I. J. Asscher and Company of Amsterdam. No diamond-cutter had ever had in his hand the destiny of so splendid a stone—one false stroke in cleaving and it would be ruined. Many anxious consultations were held before its destiny was finally decided upon. It was eventually resolved to cleave the massive stone, and special tools had to be constructed. For three days the cutter worked at his delicate task and ultimately completed the necessary incision. Then came the supreme moment, involving enormous risk and responsibility, as the lot of one of the most precious diamonds would depend on one blow of the hammer. Would it split as planned, or would it shatter into insignificant fragments?

On 10th February 1908 at 2.45 p.m., in the presence of representatives of the British Government, of qualified diamond experts, and a notary public to draw up an official statement and register the weights after the cleaving, the cutter, not without intense emotion, but with a firm hand and perfect craftsmanship, separated the Cullinan in two parts as had been planned. One part weighed 1977½, the other 1040 carats. The cleaving was continued, and after ten months of cutting and polishing the collection of stones emanating from the original Cullinan were:

Cullinan I:	
A pear-shaped diamond . . .	516½ carats
Cullinan II:	
A square-shaped diamond . . .	309⅜ carats
Cullinan III:	
A pear-shaped diamond . . .	92 carats
Cullinan IV:	
A square-shaped diamond . . .	62 carats

A heart-shaped diamond . . .	18½ carats
A marquise-shaped diamond . . .	11½ carats
A marquise-shaped diamond . . .	9⅜ carats
A square-shaped diamond . . .	6½ carats
A pear-shaped diamond . . .	4⅞ carats
96 diamonds of a total weight of . . .	7½ carats
A quantity of non-polished fragments weighing . . .	9 carats

The four largest are in the Crown Jewels in the Tower of London, their incomparable brilliance undimmed with the passing of the years. King Edward was so pleased by the craftsmanship displayed that he presented as a mark of his esteem to the Company a massive silver bowl.

THE nearest of natural gems to approach the diamond is the white zircon, whose brilliance and fire, compared with other transparent gems, have helped it to be passed off successfully as a diamond. One specimen, mounted in platinum, was bought by a jeweller for £50; the stone was actually worth £1. The diamond consists of a single element—carbon; zircon is a mixture of silica and zirconia.

White sapphires are to-day increasingly being used in pieces of jewellery set with real diamonds. Such prepared pieces find a ready sale on the black market for the beautification of the new rich.

The Board of Trade recently issued a warning against the diamond doublet. This, not in itself a fraud if the thing is openly described as what it is, is a device of ancient lineage; jewellery of centuries ago shows its employment—the backing of a front of diamond with another clear transparent material, which may be quartz, or even glass.

Isle of Kings

(Eilean Rìgh)

*Round Eilean Rìgh breaks swirling tide,
The hollow wave falls foaming there;
The sea-lord with his army rides
Storming her strongholds everywhere.
But misty field and purple hill
Are hushed above the ocean's sound
Where mighty beings are dreaming still
Of wars, within the narrow mound.*

*And faintly heard along the shore,
Where wild white-horses rear and rave,
Are voices calling evermore
From other isles beneath the wave;
Across the stretches of the sand,
Above the fringes of the sea,
They call the High Ones of the land
Who sleep their sleep on Eilean Rìgh.*

ELIZABETH FLEMING.



The Case of Valentin Lecormier

GEOFFREY HOUSEHOLD

II

[I—Sergeant-Major Valentin Lecormier is a French deserter, and in the story he addresses himself to M. le Consul at Damascus to explain, in the interests of his Arab wife and three boys, the circumstances of his desertion. He tells how when on service in Cyprus he felled his commanding officer in a drunken altercation, but escaped to Syria and to Ferjeyn, where earlier he had served, and fallen in love with Helena, daughter of John Douaihy, headman of the commune. He marries Helena and, as Nadim Nassar, settles down as one of the community. Ferjeyn is an island of Arab Christians, and everywhere around the Moslems are on the point of celebrating Syria's new-won independence by a traditional raid on the Christians.]

THE uncertainty when the Moslem attack would come tried our nerves a bit. Helena would sometimes scream at me from the courtyard because I was calm. When a woman's pride in her husband is hurt, she wishes all the world to know it. It is not so very different in France. I remember the wife of a colonel who would rush out on the barrack square whenever he came back late from Paris,

and address him from a wholly unnecessary distance. As a result, we had pity on him, and made him no more trouble than we could help.

You will say, M. le Consul, that I was unworthy of the hospitality I had received, and that I had become a coward. No, I have never been extravagantly afraid to die. But one wants to know for what. We of the Fighting French died because there was nothing much to live for, and it was easy to form the habit; but in peace that won't do. One's duty is to keep under cover.

And then I and mine were safe. I did not share Ferjeyn's hatred of the Moslems. All the surrounding country knew that I was or had become a Frenchman, and that I was only a Maronite Christian by courtesy. A man such as I could be killed any time, free of charge, if he were disliked; but if he had won affection he would be spared, raid or no raid. I was not a hereditary enemy to be treated according to the rules of the game; I could be judged on my merits. God knows I have few enough, but I have always made friends among the simple.

My only preparation was to buy myself a

THE CASE OF VALENTIN LECORMIER

good rifle. For eight years I had had no need of arms, and I was convinced I should not need them now. Still, I took care to have a whole case of good ammunition. It is idiotic to find oneself short.

We knew twelve hours before the Moslems of the plain began to stir that the raid was coming. How? M. le Consul, the Syrians cannot tell you how they know anything at all. They tip out before you a vast manure-heap of rumour. It is potentially fertile, but before it can be of use it must be spread so wide that no one can discover from what cartload the green shoot of truth has sprouted.

It was the native custom to spend only one happy hour among the Christians, attacking before dawn and leaving at sunrise. Those of us who had strong stone houses in the town, with the stables below and the living-rooms above, barricaded themselves in and demolished the outside staircases. Those who had houses of one storey, more or less European and quite unfitted for defence, sent their women and children up to the top of the mountain.

Helena wanted to go with them. I forbade it—but not, I beg you to believe, as an Arab husband who receives obedience as of right. A woman, frightened or in tears—one ignores her or distracts her attention by caress and compliment. That was not my way. I treated my wife as an equal, but I did not forget that a happy child obeys without knowing it obeys. I infected her with my confidence. It may be that she was the only woman in Ferjeyn to sleep a little.

I was sure that the raiders would not waste time in climbing as high as my house. At three in the morning, however, as a sensible precaution, I stationed myself upon the high roof of a ruined storehouse from which I could command the path. There, under cover of the parapet, I could speak with any of my Mohammedan acquaintances who might be out for sport. In case my friendliness were not immediately understood, I had, of course, my rifle.

They do not come on silently, the Arabs. It was that which first made me feel disgust, both as a soldier and a European. Good God, if one wants to surprise and kill, one should move like a tiger—whereas these poor barbarians yapped like a pack of dancing jackals! They were drunk with their religion. I understood more clearly the nature of the raid. For them, it was a sort of revival meeting.

I have no patience with fanatics. I am far from the convinced atheist that my father wished me to be, but I must admit that unbelievers have their uses. A little mockery compels the religious to behave themselves. In France, it is enough to set the tone of public opinion. The same for alcohol. What prevents us all from drinking ourselves incapable? The fear of ridicule.

But mockery is a townsman's weapon. That yelling mob of half-wit peasants called for something stronger. How many of them there were I could not tell. Over five hundred. Enough, at any rate, if one turned a Hotchkiss on them, to make the hours of paradise work overtime. Their torches showed the black masses skipping up the tracks to Ferjeyn, with the flankers leaping from terrace to terrace. They might have been a great herd of goats with the spring fever on them.

THE two streets that led into the village were defended by our young men. I do not think I malign them if I say that the chief object of each was to escape with life, and with a sword-cut or two to show that he had fought bravely. That was what we had known all along, but it was indecent to admit it. They were overrun. Of Christians and Moslems there were five dead—persons of no importance, who could be easily forgotten when the affair was patched up and speeches made and compensation paid. The leaders, as in our own wars, were well behind the front line. It is curious when you see a vagueness, a mere way of thought, translated into action. Ferjeyn did not mean to kill. Some defence was necessary, both for self-respect and to discourage raiding in future, but unforgivable losses had to be avoided.

The horde skipped and gambolled through our deserted streets, with their dirty rags floating behind them and yelling for Christian blood. There were no bankers or politicians available. Here and there, in the light of the torches, I saw a face I knew. It was rather the shadow of a face, so distorted by frenzy as to be unrecognisable. They set fire to whatever would burn. It was not much, for the old houses of Ferjeyn had walls a metre thick. My poor village idiot was chased and sacrificed. And somewhere they burst into a house. I heard the cries of the women.

The light was growing. They did not attempt to climb to the higher farms; there

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

was enough for them to do in Ferjeyn. They burst into our café and sacked it, breaking the bottles of arrack and emptying out the wine-barrels down the hill. Among them were drovers and pedlars who, when they came up to Ferjeyn on a friendly errand, would toss down a drink like anyone else and take the more pleasure since it was forbidden; but now our poor wine became a symbol of the unbeliever. So they tore down the whole shop, and set fire to the counter, shelves, and barrels in the square.

From my roof-top I could see all—the fire, the dead, and the bodies of two women upon whom they had used their knives. That was their habit, and it was Ferjeyn's to forgive. There would be apologies and then peace for another twenty years. A Moslem raid was a risk of our life. In civilised countries there are worse risks and more of them. A woman who has been run over—she is not a pretty sight either.

Then they started on the church. I should have liked to see our priest stand in the doorway with his Cross. That indeed would have been religion. And it might have worked. The Arabs are easily made ashamed by dignity. But he was up the mountain, comforting the women. Well, if it was not his business, it was certainly not mine.

They should have gone home, for there was light enough now to recognise every lunatic among them. But they were still not content. They began to knock down the stone pillars on the north side of the square, and to lever up the pavement. That, M. le Consul, was not religious mania. It was jealousy of our common heritage.

Do you know the Moslem villages in our corner of Syria? They are mud huts built upon a mound of their own filth, ten or twenty metres above the plain, which has accumulated through the ages. Well, that men who exist in those conditions should kill and burn and rape is very natural. It even astonishes me that they should lose patience only once or twice in a generation. But they cannot be permitted to outrage all the decencies.

In that moment I saw Ferjeyn as our possession, yours and mine. I will try to explain. It was a part of France or Italy or Spain. A little Christian town. It is true that the inhabitants were Arabs, and the society upon our square didn't amount to much. Nevertheless, town square it was. And even in France one does not expect profundities from

the comrades with whom one plays dominoes at the Café de la Gare.

M. le Consul, I repeat that no man can take a decision at dawn. He obeys orders and that is all. I made no choice. Being what I am, I was incapable of acting other than I did. I took, if you like, my orders from the stone. It was a part of Europe which was being violated, and that was not to be endured from barbarians who lived in mud, whose souls were brittle as mud.

I assure you that I remained calm. I was not affected by the women lying there, nor the child impaled upon a banner, nor my poor village idiot who was hardly distinguishable from his own garbage. But when they hurled down the slender drums of a pillar, I told myself it was time to act. It is true that I should have been more cautious for the sake of my wife and children. But, M. le Consul, what is the use of a family if you have not your little piece of civilisation in which to put them?

I lay down regretfully upon the parapet. From the square below, my roof-top was confused among others. They could not see who was firing nor from where. I do not pretend to be a crack shot, but I am an old soldier who can do damage even when he is under fire. Being forced into the role of avenging angel, and equally invisible, I could not miss.

First I picked off the poor fools who were tearing down the pillars, and then the banner bearers, and then any man who appeared to be well dressed. That saved the government the trouble later. I had only just begun on my third clip when Ferjeyn emptied. The light was now growing faster than they could run. I shot them down on the road and in the gaps between the ranks of olives. I had for a little while the illusion that they were Boches; it was as if I were finishing the war from which I had retired. In any case, there were resemblances. The peoples of the north and of the east—they have always been the enemies of our way of life.

On the edge of the plain, thinking they were out of range, they stopped to wave their bloody ironmongery and shout defiance. I bagged two more at twelve hundred metres. I blame myself. It was a waste of ammunition that I should have rebuked in a recruit.

WHEN the sun rose I went down into the square, my hot rifle under my arm. I might have been the only man alive. The

THE CASE OF VALENTIN LECORMIER

fire was going out. The shelves and barrel-staves had burned, but the counter of our café was only charred. It stood like a town altar to good humour. I do not say it had never been abused, but less than most altars.

The banner bearers lay on the pavement, together with the child and the two women. There was also a fanatical sheikh from the biggest village of the plain. He would cost Ferjejn a shocking sum in blood-money, that one. A single pillar was all we had lost. Two dead men lay among the fallen drums. And then there was the debris where they had jammed in the alleys trying to escape. Well, men being what they are, every square must be washed with blood in the course of its life, if it is to remain inviolate. I found a broken bottle with a cupful of arrack at the bottom. That did me good.

And so up the hill to my house. Eyes no doubt were looking at me from behind barred shutters. But nobody called to me. Nobody ventured out. They did not know what to believe, or whether the raid was indeed over. They were good, simple souls, inclined to put faith in the supernatural whenever explanation was difficult. They had no means of knowing that the only saint concerned was my rifle.

I found Helena praying, with a child on each side of her and the eldest behind. All four were very stiff and imploring, like the figures in one of those pictures in the Louvre which are all red and blue and gold. I had allowed her to teach the boys what she wished. It was not right, perhaps; but I assured my conscience that the teachings of such a woman as Helena could do only good.

I told her the raid was finished, and that it was not likely to be repeated in our lifetime. I did not yet explain what had happened. She had to be allowed her moment of joy. Two or three such moments to give strength, and one can endure one's seventy years of kicks up the backside.

The boys, of course, demanded if I had killed lots of enemies. They were disappointed when I said I did not know. What do they have in their heads, those little people, that they should think killing is so difficult? And why do their eyes shine, when they themselves cannot eat a lamb killed for the Easter dinner if they have known it alive?

old sergeant-major, I am naturally a bit of a politician, and I began to see what was on the way to me. There are times, M. le Consul, when one apprehends with absolute certainty the fate that is approaching, yet one chooses to think it has no more reality than a bad dream.

All four of us went to work on my terraces. It's not a bad life, that, when the family works together without paying or receiving wages. Each one knows that the others—even the smallest—are doing their best. And at the end of the day there is a little town in which the father of a family can relax with his companions.

My harvest was not yet in, for on the mountain we were six weeks behind the plain. As I swung my scythe—I could not bring myself to use a sickle like my neighbours—I wondered if I should ever eat the bread that Helena would make from our wheat. There is no bread in the world like our flat loaves. It even makes you forget the crusty rolls of France. But you will have eaten with the Christians high on Lebanon, M. le Consul, and you know.

Well, at eleven there was a civic procession to my land—John and Boulous Douaihy, the grocer, and the saddler, whose wife, no doubt, had now decided that she really hadn't missed much. I led them to the house. Helena brought us meat and wine, and retired. The Arab woman does not intrude on the society of men; she is perfectly capable of upsetting afterwards whatever they have decided.

We congratulated ourselves upon the courage with which we had so brilliantly dispersed the raid. We talked for an hour, showing nothing but fine Arabic and goodwill. But at last there was a shade of embarrassment. Not one of them knew for certain what had happened.

I explained, deprecatingly, that I had perhaps fired one or two shots and that, seeing it was the will of God, the bullets had not been wasted. They were so puzzled that they took me literally, and asked who fired the others. No way out! I admitted that all were mine.

'But how many have you killed?' John asked. He was so appalled that he forgot his manners. A direct question like that is not asked—unless, of course, one is encouraging a good story-teller to exaggerate his exploits.

'Perhaps a dozen. Perhaps two.' I had not counted. There were six in the square,

WELL, I cleaned my rifle and made a good breakfast. I was thoughtful. As an

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

all dead. There were eight where I had fired into the crowd: the wounded they had carried off. Then there were those in the orchards, who may have amounted to two dead and four able to crawl away. And, by the way they fell, I might count two as a result of my little lesson to them upon how far a good rifle in the hands of a French sergeant-major will carry. At least eighteen in all. I swear to you that I was shocked. It was a little too close to assassination.

John stared at me with his tarboosh jammed on his bushy grey eyebrows. He much resembled a well-fed owl. His beak was powerful, and he was of even thickness down to the point where his shanks appeared from his wide Turkish breeches. His brother, Boulos, I used to call the little owl. He had perhaps more sense, but lacked the dignity. Both of them had, in decency, to exclaim their amazement and felicitations; but I knew what they were thinking. In the eyes of the mind they saw the blood-money we should have to pay. One cannot massacre true believers in a Moslem country. It is not enough to say, as children do, that the other began it.

We decided to keep our mouths shut. The Christian Arab is accustomed to be discreet. He has the experience of twelve hundred years behind him. There was no reason at all to tell the other inhabitants of Ferjeyn what had happened. They only knew that I had been the first person to venture out into the square, and that I was armed. But that much was to be expected of a man who had been a soldier.

Helena had been listening from the next room. That is the custom, and very useful—for a silent audience always gets more sense out of a debate than the participants, who for half the time are not listening but thinking of what they will say next.

When the party had gone she asked me why I had fought. To my fellow-townsmen that was no problem; they all liked to imagine themselves doing what I had done. But Helena was puzzled. Of course she was. During those weeks before the raid I had tried hard to make her understand that it was ridiculous for a man such as I to shout and wave a gun and run away with honour satisfied. And at last she had agreed that, if I wouldn't do that, it was reasonable to keep out of local quarrels.

Well, I couldn't explain to her that it was the stone which changed my mind. She would

not have understood. Her home was sacred to her, but not the commune where she lived. Helena would have been quite content, provided she had her children and her husband, to inhabit a desert island.

I told her, therefore, that I had lost my temper. That was something wholly alien, but to which she was accustomed. I hasten to say, M. le Consul, that with my family I rarely lost my temper. But at inanimate objects—like, for example, an obstinate tree-root in the field or the rusted split-pin of an axle—it was my custom to curse like a madman. Such impatience is wholly European, so my outbreaks were a complete mystery to Helena. She took all as explained when I said that the stupidity of a Moslem fanatic affected me like an inanimate object. And it is possible that I was telling more truth than I knew.

IN the evening a whole troop of gendarmerie rode clinking and stumbling up the track to Ferjeyn. They had come, they said, to protect us from the vengeance of the Moslems. That was mere courtesy. They knew as well as we did that those poor beggars down in the plain had had a bellyful that would last them for years. What they wanted was the truth, and they were going to stay with us until they got it.

They were good material. I could have used some of them myself in old days. And they behaved decently. That was understandable, since we fed men and horses as if they had been our invited guests. The captain was an old grey fox in his fifties, with thirty years' experience of Syrian lies. We couldn't fool him, and we did not try. Every man and woman said honestly where they had been during the raid, and of course their stories tallied. There was only one liar in Ferjeyn, and that was me. I told the captain the truth, too, up to a point—that I was not afraid of the Moslems since I had many friends among them, and that I had stayed at home and taken no part in the defence. My papers were in order, and he had no reason to doubt that I was indeed Nadim Nassar, who had spent twenty years in Morocco and France before returning home. My fellow-townsmen did not talk of my origin; they were not asked. In any case, I think they had all forgotten my real name. As for the Moslems of the plain, they only remembered that I had once

THE CASE OF VALENTIN LECORMIER

been in the French Army—which was nothing extraordinary.

For a week the gendarmerie gave us no peace. We were always being visited by the sergeants, or summoned to the captain. They interrogated us separately and together, and confronted us with each other. As policemen, they weren't bad at all. They had been trained by us, and some of them, during the war, worked with the British too. But their task was hopeless. No one had seen the shots fired. Everyone could say where he was, and had witnesses.

Then the whole investigation was bedevilled by a message from the magistrate who had been taking depositions among the Moslems. They insisted that they had been fired on by a machine-gun. It is probable that they believed it. In any case they could never admit that they had run in panic from a single rifle.

The captain started on the machine-gun. It is not difficult for an experienced man to tell whether Arabs are lying or not. I do not say he will get the truth in the end; but he will know whether or not it is being told. The gendarmerie searched for that machine-gun, and did more damage to our houses than the raiders. And all the time the captain watched our faces. At the end he could have no doubt there was no machine-gun.

Then the old fool of a priest, who was not in the secret, suggested that perhaps a band of fellow-Christians had heard of our danger and ridden three hundred miles from Anti-Lebanon to help us. I have more respect for the Church than my father had, but one must admit that they can never let well alone.

It was a most improbable suggestion. Such a thing was unheard of. And how could a band of Christians have crossed the plain and hidden themselves on our mountain without being seen? Nevertheless, the captain was so puzzled that he didn't rule it out. He searched the whole mountain, looking for the tracks of horses and the empties from the machine-gun.

At last the gendarmerie left us. Horses and equipment in good order, they rode off down the hill. Considering that they had been five years without a French officer, they were well disciplined and a credit to their training. Nor did they lose interest in us. They chose their agents cleverly. During the next month there were several strangers who visited Ferjeyn to buy or sell—all of them Christians, one a

distant relative of the priest. But not another fact did they learn. I repeat—the whole village, except myself, had only to tell the truth.

MEANWHILE the Moslems of the plain were overwhelmed by the consequences of their little outing. Not only had their losses been staggering for such a raid, but the government, having now sufficient excuse to arrest anyone it liked, made a clean sweep of all political opponents. The plain swarmed with police and troops. The Moslem headmen were not allowed to bargain with us or to threaten feud. It was evident that the affair was not going to be settled by our immemorial methods, but by administrative action as in Europe.

On the face of it, this suited Ferjeyn. We should not have to kill half our sheep for a week's feasting while peace was made, nor pay the ruinous blood-money expected. But we were not altogether content. Red tape and good order were as unfamiliar to us as to the Moslems. And we did not like the silence of the authorities.

John and Boulos Douaihy went to see the provincial governor. They were very well received. The governor apologised to them for the lack of police protection, and assured them that the history of raids between Christian and Moslem was now closed for ever. That was welcome, so far as it went. But John and his brother had the impression that they were being treated as the chiefs of a wild tribe. The governor was polite, but supercilious. And, what was worse, he appeared to believe the rumour that Ferjeyn had somehow received aid from a secret society of fellow-Christians.

A month later the shock arrived. No fines, no punishment. A civilised solution. The inhabitants of Ferjeyn were to be moved right across Syria to the south of Damascus, and to take over a village of Moslems which was entirely surrounded by Christians. There would be an exchange of population as just as could be arranged, hectare for hectare and house for house. It was a typical act of the modern state. Any brutality is permissible if it simplifies the work of government servants—exception made, of course, of diplomats, M. le Consul, who maintain always the highest traditions.

Even then there was no question of handing

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

me over. They were very loyal, my two owls. But I could not hesitate. Another man, less sceptical than I, might have spent a week of sleepless nights under the illusion that he had a decision to make. To me it was perfectly clear that what I feared had arrived, and that I could only obey my destiny.

I summoned the four notables of Ferjeyn who knew the truth and told them that I would confess. They were astounded. I swear it had not yet occurred to them as a solution. My father-in-law and his friends were proud men, and it was not in accordance with their traditions to hand over a citizen of the commune to justice, even if he were a French deserter.

Well, but it was the obvious way out. And at last they agreed that I should tell the truth—on condition that a sure way of escape for me could be found. They promised to cherish Helena and the children and to send me some of the proceeds of my land if it could possibly be done.

I noticed that John, though he exclaimed with the rest, was not altogether sincere. I thought that perhaps he doubted whether my confession would put off the fate of Ferjeyn. I assured him that it would. I know the Syrian officials. Even when they are determined to be Western, they do not want more work than they can help. If they were certain that the slaughter at Ferjeyn was the work of one man and that the Christians, there and elsewhere, were just as tame as they had always been, all this exchange of population would be too much bother.

Yes, John agreed to all that. It was not the question which was troubling him. He took refuge in his owliness, and said that we had discussed enough for the day, and he would tell us what he thought another time. The fact was that he did not wish to spoil an evening in which everyone had expressed such admirable and generous sentiments. In a French town he would have been a born chairman of committees.

We all insisted that he should speak out. He was the oldest of us, and, when it came to local customs, by far the wisest. 'My son, Nadim Nassar, has killed forty men,' he said—the total had become a little exaggerated. 'We shall watch day and night. We shall turn ourselves into soldiers, and Ferjeyn into a camp. But even so we cannot be sure of protecting his children from revenge. The Moslems know how to wait. One year. Two

years. And at last we shall find my grandchildren dead and mutilated.'

It was true. I might escape or the government might imprison me. But in the end my boys would fall to the bullet and the knife.

'If only it were possible for us to swear by God that he was mad, and be believed!' It was the saddler who thus regretted my sanity. But he was on to a good idea. There is no blood-feud against the children of a madman.

To pretend to be a lunatic! M. le Consul, the more I thought of it, the more I liked it. And then the Moslems would no longer feel disgraced. They would be predisposed to accept the explanation. To run from a madman with a rifle—well, who wouldn't?

It was clear to me that one only needed a little cunning. I have no faith in plans, which are always worthless. But when it comes to putting on a comedy, I am in my element. Any experienced sergeant-major has acquired a sense of stage management.

I told the four to keep silent about my intentions, and that in a day or two I would have something to propose. At work and in the silence of the night I rehearsed the scene in my imagination, and when I had convinced myself that it would succeed, I talked to Helena.

HELENA was appalled when I told her that to save our little town I had determined to confess. Since Ferjeyn had not demanded the sacrifice, she saw no necessity for it at all. She was quite ready to exchange her house for some filthy Moslem hovel. When she had cleaned it for a month, she insisted, we should not know the difference. And then she relieved herself with tears. She could not sleep, she told me—myself I am always drowned in sleep—for terror of what might happen to the boys if ever it became known to the Moslems that I alone had been responsible for so many deaths. I think it was she who put the idea into the head of her father.

She claimed the right of wife and children to go with me, if I must confess and escape. But that was impossible. She had no conception of the life of an outlaw. To cross, all of us, into Turkey or Iraq was easy. And what then? A man accompanied by his family must have open dealings with strangers and foreign police. I was a French deserter. I could not account for myself—unless I gave

THE CASE OF VALENTIN LECORMIER

my identity as Nadim Nassar of Ferjeyn. And if I did that, we should never have an hour when we could feel safe. No. Alone I could vanish and perhaps remake a life. In the meanwhile Helena would be living in comfort on her own land with her father to protect her.

Then I explained to her how I meant to save the children from blood-feud. She was wise in the ways of her country, and she agreed that my scheme was possible. But not in one single detail must it fail. Raving and clowning, she said, would not be enough. To convince my public I must commit some horror that no Arab—if he were only pretending to be mad—would ever dream of. And that was to shoot her.

We were a model couple. The wives of Ferjeyn would hold me up to their husbands as a paragon. That was easier for them than to try to imitate Helena. If I could have brought myself to do so, I would have beaten her once or twice just to make the lives of my friends more peaceful. Even the Moslems spoke of Nadim Nassar and his wife. And so, if I were seen to aim at her and shoot, there would be no doubt that I was mad.

She insisted. She had no fear. She thought that a soldier such as I could pick his target, and even in a moment of emotion separate one toe from the rest. But she knew her people. There does not exist an Arab—unless trained by Europeans—who could aim at his wife and be sure of not hitting her. For them it would be an act of homicidal lunacy impossible to feign.

IT was only the four notables of Ferjeyn whom I let into the secret. The rest of my fellow-townsmen continued to be left in ignorance. John Douaihy was certain that they, too, would be convinced I was mad. He had no fear for his daughter. It is extraordinary how the Arabs, who are always letting off firearms, never trouble to find out what is practical and what is not.

We sent messengers to the headmen of the villages in the plain. Nothing was said of peace-making and compensation. We hinted—in a courteous tone of regret for old times—that the government would not allow us to take the initiative. All we wanted was an informal meeting to settle up our business affairs with old Moslem friends. We said, too—to tempt their avarice—that we might be

selling some land and stock before the exchange of population.

The notables of the plain sent us back an answer which was reasonably cordial. They didn't want us to be removed from our mountain. An interest would be gone from their empty lives. Besides, they preferred people they knew to people they didn't, whatever their religion.

The day fixed for the meeting was very hot. That's understood, of course. But it was an afternoon when even the rock lizards sought the shade. The plain was indistinguishable from a desert, and on the mountain the dust rose in eddies from our terraces and reddened the leaves of the orchards. Eight of the notables came, with their principal relations and retainers. After talks, which had no content but politeness, the cushions and carpets were spread under the pillars of the square, and some thirty of us, who were the most important, sat down to eat. The women served us. Helena had put on her native costume. She was like the girls of the Crusaders, flowing in robes and embroidery. There was certainly plenty to hit without touching flesh.

It was more dignified than gay, our feast. Naturally there was still some reserve. But manners were effortless since our customs were the same. Sometimes it seems to me a pity that the Arabs ever divided themselves into Christians and Moslems. They should have remained idolaters like the Hindus.

I had hidden my rifle on a roof-top across the square. None of us carried arms beyond those for pure decoration. Between John and me was sitting an old fool of a sheikh, a man of the utmost stupidity and kindliness. He resembled French generals I have known. He was so harmless it was incredible anyone should outrage his feelings. A great dish of rice was placed before him. At that moment I seized him by the back of the neck and plunged his face and beard in it. For good measure I emptied the cream-salad over my father-in-law. Then shouting and laughing I leaped over the heads of those who sat opposite me on the ground, and lost myself in the alleys on the other side of the square.

When I reappeared upon the roof they had not recovered from their surprise. John Douaihy was screaming apologies, and swearing that I was more Frenchman than Syrian, and that I had lost my wits in the sun like any dog of a European. Bareheaded and clothes

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

torn, I capered upon the roof-top firing shots. The Moslems were in panic. It was an unmistakable echo of the night of the raid. I think it had occurred to them, minutes before my friends took oath on it, that I might have been their only serious enemy.

I began to curse Ferjeyn and the wife who had brought me there, and I shot in the general direction of Helena. It was not difficult to miss her, but to appear mad and to miss all the other women too—well, I doubt if that scene alone would have been convincing. But Helena acted magnificently. She ran like a terrified chicken. And then, according to our arrangement, she stood still in the middle of the square and raised her arms to me for mercy.

It was a moment more tense than any crisis of war. I forced myself to concentrate. I found afterwards that my teeth had bitten deep into my tongue. I fired. She fell like a dead woman. I shall never forget how the cries of the people in the square were all at once silenced. I watched her face, which they could not see, and she made me a little smile of congratulation. Another second, and I should have blown my brains out.

She told me, when I saw her again, that the bullet had passed through the great wings of her arms as she lifted them, and close to the body. And then what did she do, my well-beloved? She passed her left hand under her robe and ripped the flesh from a rib with the nail of her middle finger so that it would appear she had been grazed. That will seem

to you barbarous, M. le Consul, but it was for her children.

They chased me, but not too close—for John and Boulous deliberately led the pursuit up the wrong alley. Meanwhile I dropped to the ground in front of the saddler's shop. He had left his stable open, as if by accident, and his horse saddled. A pretty price he charged for it, too. But he had the right, and one must not ask too much of one's friends.

I rode through the olives and up across my own land by a little path where no one who did not know every stone of it would dare to follow at the gallop. There were several shots fired after me—perhaps by our guests, perhaps by men of Ferjeyn, who were horrified as much by the breach of hospitality as by my treatment of Helena. I passed my house and waved to my boys. Their dear faces were full of conflict as those of men. They were wildly excited by my speed, but they could not help knowing that the bullets which cut the leaves and whined were meant for me.

By God, when it was all over, I think my four friends themselves were mystified. There had been, I must admit, a certain gusto in my acting—in all, that is, that did not concern Helena. It was a relief, for once, to be permitted to have the manners of an apache and push a venerable beard into the eternal rice. There is no doubt, M. le Consul, that in the long run it is a strain for us to behave as formally as Arabs. I am ashamed of it, but I cannot deny it.

(To be concluded.)

Return

*This is the place where I have wished to be
Through the long years of exiled bitterness.
Unchanged these far blue hills, this Northern sea,
Time has not made remembered beauty less.*

*Only the kindly friends I loved are gone,
Their once-familiar places strangers fill.
And yet the land is fair, the sun that shone
Upon the happy past is lovely still.*

*Still spreads the heather in a purple flame,
Just as in dreams I held its memory fast,
Long loved and longed for—all is still the same,
And I am happy, now come home at last.*

J. MACKAY.

Mechanical Cricket

JOHN DOWNTON

IN this electronic age it is perhaps inevitable that a robot bowler has been constructed resembling a refrigerator and worked from batteries. Once the switches are set, this mechanical mixture of brute force and guile can release up to fifteen deliveries, varied for speed, length, and spin. The apparatus is ideal for coaching young cricketers when practising a particular stroke which demands an accurate bowler, for mere humans can rarely guarantee to place the ball twice out of three times on a required spot.

The first practical bowling-machine was invented by the cricketer N. Felix as long ago as 1837, and he called it 'the catapulta.' Based on the ancient artillery of Roman times, which hurled rocks and heavy javelins over short distances, Felix's instrument was an affair of straps and springs which actuated a hammer. This struck the ball forcibly off a platform towards the batsman in the manner of a cue powerfully hitting a billiard-ball. The Surrey Club immediately ordered a model, which was much appreciated by the members; Harrow School followed suit; and later the manufacturers delivered the catapulta as far north as Scotland.

Its practicality can be appreciated by the fact that in a match between the Gentlemen and Players of Hampshire the amateurs were allowed to use the catapulta as they were short of a fast bowler. The scoresheet shows the first six professionals as 'Bowled Catapulta,' which justified its cost of eleven guineas from the equipment shop at Lord's, where it was sold.

Felix was of the opinion that for every conceivable ball the bowler was likely to deliver there was an appropriate batting stroke, and acting on this assumption he practised wholeheartedly against his bowling-machine, to become one of the master batsmen of his day.

ONCE the potentialities of the catapulta were recognised, other minds set about improving the mechanism. The famous John Wisden, known in cricket history as 'The Little Wonder,' for he was only five feet four inches tall, refined the gears and patented his version.

The advertisements of his firm praised the contrivance's merits, saying that any gentleman could provide himself with first-class practice at home with his valet to wind up and fire off the ball, while if set to a moderately-paced ball the machine was safe in the hands of ladies. Its popularity grew apace, so that a Manchester firm of toolmakers successfully marketed a different form, based on the same principle, but capable of spinning the ball, a quality which the older forms lacked.

THE begetter of the original bowler was a gifted man. Besides this robot invention, he evolved the tubular batting-glove, which ousted the inefficient padded finger-stall previously in fashion, and he also devised an elbow-pad. Both these pieces of protective armour were a necessity in the last century, for even at Lord's, the home of cricket, the wicket was murderous. It was not uncommon for three shooters to be followed by a head-high bumper and the danger was to limb and indeed to life, for it is on record that a batsman died after a blow on the head at Marylebone. Felix advocated pads long before they entered into general use.

His name appears in cricket history in a curious manner. At the age of twenty he became headmaster of the family scholastic concern, the Alfred House Academy, situated on the outskirts of London. His talents of writer, musician, linguist, and artist were in keeping with his position as mentor to young gentlemen, but cricket with its shady char-

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

acters and bookmakers shouting the odds by the pavilion rails was deemed unsuitable in his day for the academic part of the curriculum. So Nicholas Wanostrucht of the cap and gown hid on the cricket-field under the pseudonym of N. Felix.

In this name he signed the pencil-sketches of cricketing scenes now in the Lord's museum and published that collector's volume *Felix on the Bat*, in which he mingled sound technical advice with a good deal of classical

allusion. Thus the latest electric-bowler has been nicknamed 'Felix' after the most inventive and accomplished player the game of cricket has known, and this name certainly seems more appropriate to the game than the Flemish tongue-twister with which he came into the world.

But the 20th-century version of the catapulta seems unlikely to rival the popularity of the original, for it costs some hundreds of pounds to construct.

A New Era in Greenland

FRANK MOSS

GREENLAND, the huge frozen Danish island seventeen times as large as England and known to the ordinary man chiefly through its hymnbook association with icy mountains, has recently become the scene of great activity. Virtually unchanged for centuries, a frozen land of little interest to the rest of the world, from which it was isolated by nature and the Danes, Greenland is now changing rapidly and will be a country of which we may hear much during the next fifty years. The reasons for these changes are of great interest.

Curiously, the changes have little to do with the large numbers of men and the immense amount of materials which the Americans are pouring into the three air-bases leased to the United States. The sight of an aeroplane is no longer strange to the Greenlanders, but he is taking no part in the struggle of foreigners to overcome the intense cold of his country with the aid of modern science. The U.S. air-base in the far north at Thule, details of which were released some time ago, may become a minor Clapham Junction of the airways, serving planes taking a short-cut over the Pole. But the men who man it have no contact with the Greenlanders. The tremend-

ous distances involved—Thule is a thousand miles from any large settlement—could alone be responsible, but, in fact, the lack of contact is deliberate.

In accordance with their traditional policy of protecting the Greenlanders from outside influences, the Danes made it a condition of leasing the bases that there should be no contact between the men using them and the native inhabitants of Greenland. Until 1951 the Greenlanders were equally protected from those who might come to his country for other purposes. A visit to this 'forbidden land' of the North could be made only with special permission from the Danish government, and this was given normally only to members of scientific expeditions. Even sailors from ships of foreign countries carrying supplies were forbidden to mix with the Greenlanders. In 1951 the ban was relaxed in recognition of the great changes coming to Greenland and the tourist can now, if he wishes, visit this country, if he can find transport.

The tourist would find a vast country of some 840,000 square miles, of which all but about 100,000 miles, mostly on the west coast, is covered with permanent ice, over 1000 feet thick in places, filling in valleys and forming

A NEW ERA IN GREENLAND

a gigantic ice-plateau. Unless he were equipped for a polar expedition, he would find the greater part of the country completely inaccessible. Most of it, indeed, has never been surveyed except from the air and the difficulties encountered by recent British air expeditions have shown that even with modern equipment the inhospitable ice-cap can be dangerous.

THIS land is inhabited by only about 20,000 Greenlanders and 1000 Danes, the majority of them living in the small towns along the southwest coast, of which the capital and largest is Godthaab at the entrance to the Davis Strait, with a population of less than 1500. Many people refer to the inhabitants of Greenland as Eskimos. In fact, over the centuries they have intermarried with immigrants from Scandinavia to such an extent that they now form a distinct race. They do not like being called Eskimos and are always referred to as Greenlanders. The Danes are, for the most part, administrators, doctors, dentists, teachers, and so on, spending a few years in Denmark's major colony, for which the mother country has a great affection and on which she has lavished a great deal of money.

In Denmark you seem to find few professional men and women of middle-age who have not spent some time working in Greenland and it is remarkable that, in spite of the inevitable discomforts of life in such a climate, they all appear to have a sentimental regard for the country and frequently talk of returning. To appreciate Greenland, they say, you must go not as a visitor only during the long summer days, but live in the country, enjoying its subtle beauties and getting to know its inhabitants, who are quite unspoiled by contact with Europeans. Indeed, the Greenlanders are themselves as much European as anything else and in the new political and social changes which are taking place it is to the European tradition that they look. Many of the women are strikingly beautiful—they are no uncommon sight in the streets of Copenhagen and not a few work in Denmark. Greenland has had no need for prisons, just for the reason that there have never been any crimes.

Until recently Greenland had little need for money, because its economy was a closed circuit. The Greenlanders lived on seals and

walrus, which provided not only their food but also their heat for cooking it, their light, and their clothes. All trade was done through the Royal Greenland Company, a benevolent monopoly of the Danish government, concerned as much in the welfare of the Greenlanders as in trade and costing the Danish government a considerable sum every year. The only serious commercial exploitation of natural resources has been the mining of cryolite, a mineral used in making aluminium. The mine at Ivigtut, in the south, has been worked for about fifty years by a private company, which now raises over 100,000 tons of crude cryolite a year for shipping to Denmark and the United States.

THE centuries-old economy of Greenland based on the seal was destroyed by the virtual disappearance of this animal. Where a hundred years ago it was estimated the seal catch was one a week for every man, woman, and child in the country, to-day it is only about one in six months. The seal disappeared partly as a result of overhunting, but more because of the remarkable change that has taken place in the climate of Greenland during the present century. There has been a gradual warming up, part of the great climatic change in the northern hemisphere. The change drove the seal north, but fortunately resulted in cod being attracted in vast numbers into water which had previously been too cold for them. In the last few decades the economy of Greenland has changed from a seal basis to a cod basis and three-quarters of the income of Greenlanders now comes from cod which, half-a-century ago, they hardly knew.

The arrival of the cod is only one of the results of the climatic change which is half the explanation for the great economic and political changes in Greenland. Another manifestation of the relaxing of the cold has been the appearance of soil which has been ice-covered for centuries. It is believed that ten centuries ago the climate of Greenland was much milder. Contact with Scandinavia was considerable. Then about the 15th century a 'little ice age' clamped down and it is the reversal of this trend which is bringing changes to-day. If the present trend towards greater warmth continues, the effects will be far-reaching for many countries. Already, for instance, it means that harbours in Spitsbergen can be used for two more months in the year.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

Nowhere will the effects be more important than in Greenland. A few hundred square miles relaxed from the grip of the ice for sheep-rearing, a few more square miles where vegetables and even cereals could be grown would make an immense difference. The melting of the ice might also reveal mineral resources. Coal, lead, zinc, wolfram, and other minerals are known to exist, but only now are preparations beginning for possible exploitation.

The coming of the cod meant more than a change from hunting to fishing. Cod provide food, but not oil for heating and lighting or skins for clothing. It meant that the Greenlanders had to catch more cod than they needed and sell the surplus to buy these imported necessities. Before the War, there was hardly a fishing-boat in Greenland. To-day, there are hundreds of small ones owned by Greenlanders. Canning, salting, and quick-freezing factories are being built. Incidentally, places extremely rich in shrimps have been discovered, perhaps again as a result of the climatic change, and these will be canned.

The diminishing returns from other fishing-grounds have naturally led trawlers from Europe to seek the now-rich grounds off Greenland and these may prove the fisherman's new El Dorado. The Greenlanders have no ships for deep-sea trawling, but the fishing-grounds may bring them trade from the need of the large trawlers for supplies of all kinds. The one danger feared is that over-fishing will result in the cod disappearing. Another change in climate might have the same result. To the deep-sea fishermen this would simply mean having to seek new grounds elsewhere. For the Greenlanders, however, with their economy increasingly based on cod, it would be a tragedy.

The present indication is that the trend towards a warmer climate will continue and it was this, perhaps, that led the Premier of Denmark to refer to Greenland as 'the promised land.'

GREAT political changes have accompanied the climatic changes and might even be said to stem from them, since the substitution of a cod for a seal economy meant that barter could no longer be sufficient. The Greenlanders had been completely protected from the evils that have so often followed the first

contact of a primitive people with civilisation and resulted in the virtual extermination of the primitive people. The problem of continuing to protect them while still allowing them to grow up economically and politically has been a delicate one for Denmark. The Danes are dealing with it conscientiously and imaginatively.

The very successful visit of King Frederik and Queen Ingrid to Greenland in 1951 symbolised the changes in Greenland's status. Representative government in its simplest form and education have been greatly expanded in Greenland in the last forty years. Now, following a report of a Royal Commission in 1949 and legislation in the Danish Parliament in 1951, Greenland has been given a Council and the franchise for all those over 23. Greenland remains under the Danish Parliament, in which it is not represented, but it is represented on the Danish Committee which decides on Greenland's affairs and which will act on the advice and recommendations of the Greenland Council.

With representative government in this first limited form goes universal state education and a new penal code, although this seems unnecessary in a country that is without crime. Free enterprise is to be allowed to play its part in the development of Greenland economically, although at first it must inevitably be handicapped against the subsidised Royal Greenland Company, whose object has been to prevent the violent fluctuations in prices so harmful to a comparatively primitive people. The word 'primitive,' by the way, must not be misunderstood. Greenlanders have shown themselves fully capable of absorbing education and are an extremely charming people. Indeed, some Danes have found them and their country so attractive that they have settled with them and adopted their way of life.

After two centuries as an unknown and isolated land, Greenland is emerging to be westernised, as far as a country with a climate and resources so different from that of the west can be westernised. Its population has increased and no doubt will increase more rapidly. Good medical services are more and more limiting the effects of western diseases, particularly tuberculosis, so often devastating to a primitive people. Whether it does indeed become a 'promised land' may depend on the climatic trend, but it will certainly no longer be a 'forbidden land.'



The Holiday

ALAN WYKES

FROM the beginning the holiday was to be different. Even when they stood across the road waiting for the tram to take them to the station and looked over at the shop they felt as if they were already strangers to a life that had enclosed them in a glass-case.

To travel! They thought of it as adventure, not consciously using that word, but nevertheless aware of the quickening of pulse, the awakening of imagery of a foreign land. Secretly they thought of the Belgians—they were going to a small watering-place near Ostend—as having characteristics different from any they had known in English people; thought of them as capable of bringing about a broadening of outlook they were sure they should have; and, very secretly, so that they did not, could not, perhaps, admit it even to themselves, they sought some happiness that existed in no place they had yet known.

They stood in the sunlight, on the ephemeral edge of discovery, waiting for the tram. Across the road the gold-leaf letters on the brown fascia of the shop threw back their name: *F. & V. Buller. Fred and Violet. Groceries and Provisions.* Through the open door they could see Tom, youthful and brown-smocked, trying to assume the dignity of being left alone for a whole fortnight to run the shop.

'Think he'll be all right?' Mr Buller asked. He tried to disguise a concern he knew he should not have felt.

Always, for fifteen years, both inside and outside the shop, Mr Buller had worn a bowler-hat. To-day, to show that he could with equal effect cope with old and new, he wore a tweed cloth cap very flat on his head. He felt uncomfortable in it, and Mrs Buller knew this. But she said: 'Tom'll look after things. He's right as ninepence.' Then: 'It's a change to see you in a cap, Fred. I like it.'

'Change is as good as a rest.' He had a lugubrious voice, with something of the wistful quality of a child's in it. It seemed strange issuing from a body grown big with lack of exercise and the authority of the small trader.

Mr and Mrs Buller were of some standing in the neighbourhood. They dealt fairly with their customers and were not hard on genuine need for credit. It was known, too, that they would often advance a pound or two to meet the rent- or insurance-man's demands. The neighbourhood was a poor one, but it was characteristic of his customers' attitude that in the fifteen years since he had opened the shop he had lost less than a hundred pounds in bad debts.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

Each year they had taken their holiday separately, because of the shop. They had gone to Margate or Eastbourne or Clacton and returned perhaps better in health, but strangely unsatisfied in experience, which lack of satisfaction they attributed to the fact that they both wanted a change, a real change, not simply of environment or terrain, but of outlook, culture, and approach to the problem of living. They thought of this desire in terms of custom and tradition, of how other, *different* people did things. And because Tom was now old enough to be left with the responsibility of the shop the opportunity was at last present. With the rise of Tom's arm in valedictory salute and the roar of the tram as it bore them away a soft echo might have accompanied them: *Now voyager. . .*

THE journey was strangely uneventful. They had thought they'd feel nostalgic, note some regret shown by the speeding green of England as it watched their departure, perhaps some admonition to return carved on the white cliffs, or anger that they should thus leave their homeland expressed in waves building against the ship's sides. But there was nothing. The fields remained green and quiet with grazing cattle and the sky was clear-blue. Even the sea was still, marked only by sunlight and etched ripples. Mr and Mrs Buller wanted to compensate themselves for the vague sense of hurt they felt. As they moved off from the quay they looked back and saw the yellow beach, alive with holiday-makers. Across the widening ribbon of water they heard laughter and strident music, muted by distance and their own aloofness. They left the stern of the ship and walked toward the bow, as if they turned a slightly distasteful page.

'The place is thick with people,' Mr Buller remarked. He felt as he had once felt on learning that an errand-boy he had employed, and to whom he gave three chances to mend his ways, had ended up in Borstal: the attitude of washing his hands of the whole affair.

Mrs Buller, wiry and sparse, strutted beside him. 'Yes, it's nice to be going somewhere where there's less crowds—' She had intended to add, 'of common people,' but she stopped guiltily. All the same, she felt the rightness of Fred's action in turning away from the receding shore toward the shore that drew them nearer: she felt it to be symbolic.

IT was a day of violent August heat. Even before they stepped ashore they were conscious of clinging clothes and the need to watch one's temper. In the little customs-office Mr Buller replied with what his wife considered great dignity to the official's questions. They arranged for their luggage to be sent on and passed through the customs into the cobbled street that led from the quay to the town.

It was a quiet street, with modern red and yellow villas built on only one side. Each house was different from its neighbour in detail but the same in essential ugliness. Looking along the street toward the town, they saw only a huddled rash of red, green, and grey roofs, a rococo church, a maze of supporting poles for the overhead tramway-wires. Between the poles and strung across the street were loops of wired coloured lamps. There was no background, only the sprawl of villas and the heat-hazed sky. Looking the other way, they saw flat sandy soil sparsely covered with yellowing grass and dotted with scrub. The dunes stretched to the distance where they joined with the sky. Far away to the right they could see a tiny building, not large enough for a cottage, vivid white in the sunlight. It stood like an oasis in the centre of their disappointment. Mrs Buller pointed and exclaimed: 'There! I wonder what that can be? You'd never see anything like that in England.'

Mr Buller scratched frantically in his memories of travel-books borrowed from the public library. 'Probably a shrine. They're common on the Continent, I believe.'

'How picturesque!' Mrs Buller visualised a mausoleum rich with the smell of decay and death. 'Who can be buried there, I wonder.'

'Well—er—more a place of worship than a grave, I think. We must go and see it.'

AT the hotel they were received with ceremony by Mme Renson, whose smile was bright with gold teeth and who wore a dress with a pattern of flowers as big as dinner-plates. She was delighted and said so in ornate French, with lavish gestures of her sparkling fingers. She knew some English, but kept it for really essential phrases, such as: 'The bill is five hundred francs,' 'Ere we have give always the most satisfaction to our English ones.' 'Such a genuine woman,' Mrs Buller said later.

THE HOLIDAY

Their room looked across the town to the sea. It smelled slightly fusty and was furnished with an abundance of red plush and reproductions of gory interpretations of the Crucifixion. On the bedside-table were two books left by previous English visitors: *Road Floozie* and *The Rosary*. There was also a purple-and-pink hair-tidy with some combings of blonde hair hanging by the fireplace, and a chamber-pot encircled by a frill of silver-paper beneath the bed.

Mrs Buller crossed to the window and looked out. Behind her, her husband surreptitiously turned the pages of *Road Floozie*. She could see the beach massed with children and people in bathing-suits. Outside many of the shops there were tables and chairs and bright umbrellas, with people sitting with ices and coloured drinks. They were nearly all laughing or looked gay. Girls walked along the streets wearing bathing-suits or with their breasts bound with coloured handkerchiefs. That at least was unfamiliar. How shocked English people would be, she thought. She also was shocked, but it did not occur to her to think so. 'Look, Fred! It's so jolly and free and easy!'

They spent their first few days on the beach or riding in a small-boat rowed by a man who wore a bright-blue smock. He took them a few hundred yards out and they paid him two hundred francs with pleasure, because at least his dress was unfamiliar. Afterwards they sat outside the confectionery shop and ate ice-cream and discussed what they would do next. 'We could have a turn at the pictures. I've often wondered what their films are like,' said Mr Buller.

'And don't forget that shrine place. We must see that, Fred. We said we would.'

'Save it for an afternoon when there's nothing else to do,' Mr Buller replied.

The days were very hot and Mr Buller no longer felt bound by convention to wear a suit. Instead, he bared his upper body to the sun and wore a pair of green linen shorts and a red belt and sandals tied to his feet with blue cord. He thought he must look rather like a Roman emperor. When his chest and back became sore and red with the sun he shrouded himself in a flaming bath-robe.

They went for rides inland on the yellow rattling tram, with the Kodak slung over Mr Buller's shoulder. But there was no change of scenery, nothing they could photograph: only the miles of sparsely-covered sand-dunes and

the spreading rash of villas. They told each other how nice it had been, how different from any holiday they had had before. And one afternoon Mr Buller bought himself a souvenir, a ring, at a shop in the town. He had always wanted one, and this one was large and elaborately chased with a mystic design of black and gold. He liked to think it was probably some Eastern incantation or charm. He paid a lot of money for it, but, as Mrs Buller said, it was worth it to have something original, unusual.

They spoke several times of the shrine, which they could still see standing white and alone in the distance, but it was not until the day before they were due to leave that they found themselves walking over the dunes toward it.

THE shrine stood mirage-like in the hot distance and, like a mirage, it seemed to come no closer. They had been walking for half-an-hour and still it seemed tantalisingly far away. Their shoes were getting filled with sand and Mrs Buller was very conscious of her face shining with sweat. Away over the sand the sea curved like a glass saucer. There was silence and the sun and the plateau of still sand. Nothing else. Then the shrine, a little more detailed, so that they could see the black lines dividing the bricks and knew they were really getting nearer. They walked on, soft-shoed in the sand, the pioneers, flesh sweating beneath the flowered frock and the bright robe. They felt the flesh distending the rings on their fingers—hers that bound her to him, his that bound him to the day, the past, the search.

They came to the shrine at last. It was an up-ended box affair, not much taller than a man and built of bricks that were dirty grey. It was hard to see why it was so conspicuous from a distance. The roof was thatched with aged straw and in the side was an iron grille secured by a rusty padlock. Before the shrine was a rotting wooden seat, and on it sat an old woman clothed all in black, quiet as the afternoon, her eyes opaque with memory, her fingers moving on her beads.

They felt embarrassed, knew the desire to cough or clear the throat or remark on the weather. They moved away and looked at the sky and sea, their attitude discounting completely the presence of both shrine and worshipper. But the old woman, the beads

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

still circling in her fingers, called to them: 'Do not go, m'sieu. The saint will hear everybody's prayers,' which was really more embarrassing than ever; but, being foreign, the old woman would of course be offended if they went away.

'It's a lovely shrine,' Mrs Buller said, hoping to clear the air. She thought: How strange her bulky black body looks in the sunshine—like something dark and . . . bad. Beyond the old woman she saw the grille of the shrine, rusty iron bars; and beyond the grille the garish plaster-saint, highly coloured and beneficently sentimental, dominating the tableau within the shrine, the trembling false flowers of gilt and red and purple, the papier-mâché Hill of Calvary and the three leaning crosses. It was all like a child's plaything.

Mr Buller stood by, hot and uncomfortable and suddenly tired. He felt he should say something. He said: 'Those flowers—are they real gold?'

'Oh no, m'sieu. Coloured paper is just as effective, and less expensive. Saint Étienne is just as pleased.'

'How quaint!' Mrs Buller said. 'Do you come here every day?'

'Every day, Madame. And my mother before me, and her mother before that, back into many years. When I miss coming I am lonely and unhappy, as when I went to England to look after my son's wife who was dying there. But I treated that as a sacrifice.' She paused and they saw her face netted with wrinkles, the dull single-minded eyes, the cumbersome rusty black clothes, the timeless search implicit in her posture, strength and weakness and some darkly mysterious knowledge and tranquillity that she had found. They were suddenly conscious of their own clothes. They could say nothing. Far away a ship's siren hooted and fell silent, a scimitar through the afternoon. Then the old woman spoke again, the scimitar fell. 'These for Saint Étienne.' From her black dress she produced a few coins, dropped them in the slot in the grille. They fell, tinkling on iron. 'For answering my prayers.'

'Does he always answer them?'

The old woman shrugged. Mr Buller thought: Really Vi, that's not really a thing to ask, is it? But he found himself saying: 'What do you pray for?' Actually smiling as he said it, involuntarily, quite cynically.

'For what does one pray? A little courage, a little wine, a little less rheumatism in the

bones. For the saintlier ones there is more than this, but for me and those like me there is nothing else. When one is not a saint it is much easier to believe one's prayers are answered.' She was laughing at them: Mr Buller was sure of it. He imagined the shrivelled body under the black clothes, shaking with laughter. Horrible. Like a rattling skeleton. What the devil had made them come to this place of prayers and penny-in-the-slot saints? He pulled the bath-robe round his moist body, adjusted his cap. 'Well, we must be going. Good-day.'

'Au revoir, m'sieu. I will say a prayer for you.'

'Damnable cheek. As if we wanted her blasted prayers.'

THEY did not speak during the walk back across the hot sand. Once Mr Buller looked round, but the old woman had gone. Only the shrine stood out, white now in the distance and the burning sun. When they reached their room they found it hot and airless, with windows closed and blinds drawn. Mme Renson had lighted a cone of incense and put it in a saucer on the dressing-table. The room was filled with the sweet oppressive smell; it clung to all the musty draperies and followed them, even after they had fallen asleep.

When they reached home the next day they individually and secretly put away the clothes they had worn into the most inaccessible corners of trunks and cupboards. Mr Buller took off the ring he had bought. It had become rimed on the inside with a film of verdigris. He put it away in the corner of a drawer. In time it became forgotten. But the afternoon at the shrine he could not forget. And the old woman—had she found, among the claptrap of saints and paper flowers and prayers, some peace bought with a few coins dropped into the shrine for a purpose neither he nor she knew? Could she have found, with her daily pilgrimage and her mild and uncomplicated philosophy, some undreamed-of happiness? He realised that he could never know.

When in the days that followed they found themselves again in the glass-case of their life, they felt no regret; only a strange gladness that, as they had approached England, the holiday-makers had been there, massed and sprawling on the sands almost as they

had left them, with the same strident music in the air, the same bold search for gaiety.

People coming into the shop asked if they had enjoyed their holiday. They replied yes,

they had had a wonderful time—really wonderful. But they had already decided that next year they would go to Southend or Clacton, or perhaps Blackpool.

Peat-Fire Memories

VIII.—The Sabbath Day

KENNETH MACDONALD

THERE is a proverb in the Isles which says: 'As long as a Communion Sunday.' And all Sundays were long days in the Isles when there was little or nothing to do except go to church. Fifty years ago it was a day of worship and rest, when the influence of the church was very strong and one dared not do other than attend the services, even if one did not feel like it. To-day, Sunday is very different, and some people are even daring to do small jobs on this day.

In my youth Sunday began a long time before midnight on Saturday. If it was near the Sabbath, no job was started. On the Saturday the usual activities went on, plus all the necessities for Sunday that could be managed. All the boots were brushed and polished for the services and a double supply of potatoes, water, peats, and food taken in. As children it was our job to get the extra supply of water from the well. It meant four or five trips with two large zinc pails and filling up the big earthenware jar or all the pots and pans in the house. The large wooden hoop which we placed over the pails eased the weight a bit. On stormy days a wisp of hay or straw was put in the pails to prevent the wind blowing the water out.

The potatoes and vegetables (cabbage and turnip) were prepared and put in the pot ready to be hung over the fire on Sunday. Practically everybody went to church except the person in charge of the dinner. Most houses had

sheep's-head broth that day. The head was first singed over the face with a red-hot tongs and then split up the front with an axe. The brains were smeared over the face.

Knives and forks were becoming a little more plentiful, and most houses had at least two or three of each. At times the knives could not be found. Granny had one in the barn cutting potatoes, and forgot to bring it back. Murdo had another one shaping a block of wood into a boat. Often have I heard my mother say: 'The knife I had this morning cannot be found anywhere.' The fork was as a rule all twisted, having been used as a marlinespike by Norman or John to open that terrible knot on his laces which was so contracted with water that Samson himself could not have drawn it any tighter.

Potatoes were always served in their jackets. It was a sin to peel them before they went in the pot, but not a sin to peel them cooked at table. The children all hated broth and supped small spoonfuls round the edges. There was not much meat on a sheep's head, but a trotter was a fine thing to get your teeth into.

Immediately after dinner we all went to the Sunday-school, where we were taught to read the Bible in Gaelic, sing psalms, and learn the Shorter Catechism from cover to cover, including the grace before and after meat. I do not know if there is a Longer Catechism, but the short one felt long enough. We also

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

used to save the peas from the broth and throw them at each other when a favourable opportunity presented.

THERE were times, however, when we managed to slip away from the rigours of the Sabbath and enjoyed ourselves out of sight of prying eyes down on the sands, where we played football with a fisherman's cork, ate dulse, or climbed the rocks in search of sea-birds' nests. Sometimes these depredations were reported to our parents and *Diluain a bhreabain* awaited us on the Monday morning. *Diluain a bhreabain* means 'Monday of the kicks.' It was a sin to chastise or punish on the Sabbath, and perhaps that was a good thing, because the time-lag helped to cool frayed tempers and gave parents time to weigh and consider, and even sometimes forget, the impending punishment.

Grace was said before and after each meal, and I have seen old crofters even before drinking a glass of milk lay their cap reverently to one side and first ask a blessing. Family worship was held in every house at night before retiring to bed. A chapter was read and a portion was sung and everybody knelt down on the clay floor while the parent prayed and thanked God for the mercies He had provided that day. The people had no luxuries, but were grateful for the smallest mercies. It was customary then for neighbours to shake hands with each other when they met each morning and ask: '*An fhuair sibh tamh an raoir?*' ('Did you have peace last night?').

Outside church service hours everybody stayed indoors on Sunday and read the Bible or '*Turas a Chrìosdaidh*' (*The Pilgrim's Progress*). There was no ceilidhing that day. Cattle and sheep, of course, had to be attended to and herding had to be done, but these were works of necessity and mercy. It was a sin to walk through the croft and see how the crops were getting on. I knew one ardent Sabbatarian who used to take the fly-paper down on Sunday. He maintained it was a sin to have it trapping flies on the Lord's Day. Another kept the rooster under a creel on Sunday because he thought it wrong for the bird to be amongst the other fowls on that day.

Only fifteen years ago I was chastened by a deacon for not being at the morning service. Jokingly I answered that I had listened to an excellent service that morning over the radio. 'How,' he retorted, 'can a service coming out

of a wooden box have any spiritual value?' Old traditions and methods die hard and great courage is required by any person in these isolated communities who desires to break away from them.

I recall one girl who was teaching in a village several miles from Stornoway, where her home was. She lodged in the village during the school week and cycled home for the week-ends. This involved cycling back to the village every Sunday evening. The landlady took strong objection to this and told the girl that if it did not stop she would have to look for other lodgings. The teacher remonstrated with her, but to no avail.

About the same time a Communion was being held in the district and a motor-car arrived with the presiding ministers on the Sunday. 'What,' asked the teacher, 'is the difference between me cycling on the Sunday and the ministers arriving in a car?' 'A big difference,' came the reply. 'The ministers have not to work their legs in a car, the same as you do on a bicycle.'

COMMUNION is held twice a year in all the parishes, and lasts for five days, from Thursday until the following Monday. It takes place at different times in all the parishes and this gives an opportunity to the other parishes to join in, and indeed they do, for they flock in hundreds from all parts of the island to the Communion centre. In the old days it was customary to remain for the full period. Every available corner of the household was used for sleeping, and in many cases the overflow slept on straw in the barns. There was strong competition and rivalry as to who would have the most visitors. Nobody was turned away and the lodging was free. Anything up to twenty visitors was not uncommon. There was some strain, of course, on the food-supply and utensils, but potatoes and fish were plentiful at that time and that was the backbone of the meal.

Most of the women wore the lovely old-fashioned mutch, with the white goffered frills round the front. To hold it, so that it would not be crushed in any way, they all carried a big round tin box with a handle on the top. In these days all other forms of headwear were abandoned immediately after marriage.

Communions are still regularly held in the Isles, but the old ways have changed. Not so

UNTAPPED WEALTH FROM BRITAIN'S SEAS

many people go now, and they travel back and fore in buses, coming back as a rule the same night. Streams of these buses can be seen on the last day of the Communion returning home. I have counted as many as twenty in one long line, and it was moving to listen to the mournful singing of psalms as the buses passed through the village on a quiet autumn evening.

IN the ceilidh-house a certain amount of leg-pulling goes on between the religious folk and the others. During a meal on one of these occasions one of the wags asked, after the man of the house had said a specially long grace before his meal: 'Do you think, Torquil, God heard your grace?' 'Every word of it,' replied Torquil reverently. 'Oh well,' said Donald, as he rose to take his departure, 'I am sure he enjoyed it and had a good laugh to himself.'

Another chap just happened to be sitting down to a meal when the village elder appeared in the doorway. Angus had not been in the habit of saying grace and knew his

words were a bit rusty. So partly to get over the difficulty the elder was begged to sit in and join the table. Angus knew well that the honour of saying grace would fall to the elder and thus he himself would be able to escape his predicament. But it did not turn out according to plan. The elder refused out and out to have anything to eat and so Angus was forced to face the ordeal with his rusty grace. He did not want to disgrace his household in the eyes of a pillar of the church, so he tried to hide his inability by mumbling in a monotone as he drew his hand reverently backwards and forwards across his face. When he was finished, the elder remarked that he had not heard a single word of his grace. 'That may be so,' answered Angus, 'but it was not with you I was doing business.'

I have listened spellbound to the delivery of some of these old uneducated and untravelled crofters on *La na Ceist* ('The Day of Questions') during Communion. The logical reasoning, the flow of language, and the humble and earnest way in which they approached was a pleasure and a delight to listen to.

Untapped Wealth from Britain's Seas

JOHN NEWELL

THOSE pessimists who take a poor view of Britain's future because of the possible exhaustion of her natural resources of coal and ores ignore the onward march of science. It is true enough that the production of power by nuclear fission may prove very expensive—and of minor comfort if there are no raw materials to be handled by the power the atom releases—but enormous sources of both raw materials and unlimited power lie on Britain's doorstep. They consist of the metals and chemicals and the power of the sea.

The long coastline of Britain, bringing the

sea relatively near all the industrial centres, is almost certainly going to prove a veritable El Dorado for future generations. With all the industrialised nations of the world rapidly exhausting their natural resources under the hungry demands of modern civilisation, the tapping of the wealth of the sea is inevitable—and the country with most easy access to it will be the richest.

INFINITELY more wealth than we have ever wrested from the land of Britain, our

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

colonies, and dominions lies virtually untouched in the seas that wash our coasts. It is water with literally a golden touch, for the gold in it is not dissolved, but suspended in minute grains. Hitherto, methods of extracting this gold have not proved efficient. An enterprise built on the coast of Australia some twenty years ago yielded a few ounces a week, but in a country where land deposits of gold were plentiful it did not pay. If a really efficient chemical process can be discovered to extract all the gold from the sea, then someone's fortune is made, for every cubic mile of sea-water contains no less than 23 tons of the precious metal.

Scientists are rightly concentrating on extracting from the sea metals and chemicals more useful than gold. These are present in great variety. At Harrington, on the coast of Cumberland, magnesium is being extracted from the Irish Sea. In the form of salts there are about 26 million tons in every cubic mile of water, and the intricate processes involved are well worth while because of the increasing demands of industry for this metal. Lighter than aluminium and stronger than steel, it is widely used in aircraft construction and for household appliances. If there were sufficient supplies, we could have bicycles weighing 4 or 5 lb., ladders that a tiny child could carry, and chairs which could be lifted with the little finger.

Another sea-water processing-plant working steadily in this country is on a lonely part of the Cornish coast. Built under conditions of great secrecy during the War, it played a vital part in our air offensive. The chemical produced from millions of gallons of sea-water at this lonely plant is bromine, present in sea-water at the rate of about 250,000 tons in every cubic mile.

Without this chemical, manufacture of photographic plates and films for bombers would have been difficult. It is also an important ingredient in promoting efficiency in petrol-driven engines, and it went into the fire-extinguishers in our aircraft. Bromine is also a vital chemical for the dyeing industry, as chemists discovered during the First World War, when German supplies were unavailable, and many of the drugs used for quietening nerves and inducing sleep contain it in one form or another. The world needs 35,000 tons of bromine a year, and chemists have been forced to go to the sea to keep up with the demand. The United States leads the world

in production of bromine from the sea. One plant on the coast of North Carolina makes about 5 cwt. a day. Another larger one in Texas reached 18 cwt. working day and night under war conditions.

THE chemical processes employed in extracting magnesium and bromine are involved. Much simpler is the production of alginic acid, obtained from seaweed. The western coast of Scotland is one of the world's richest sources of the right seaweed, and production of the acid is now a flourishing industry. Science has only touched on the fringe of this versatile material. Ice-cream and table jellies and soups produced commercially have alginic acid to give them a smooth yet thick consistency. The substance can also be turned out in thin sheets for wrapping chocolates and expensive goods. Processed in much the same way as nylon, it is a beautiful thread. As it will not burn it is valuable for spreading thinly on timber construction and for electrical installations. Because it is waterproof it makes an invisible paint for concrete floors and flat roofs.

After the alginic acid has been extracted, the seaweed is still a valuable fertiliser, though there are better sources of food-growing material than this in the sea. Potash, obtained at great cost from the few land deposits which exist or from rapidly disappearing natural deposits of guano, is present in British coastal waters in quantities sufficient to fertilise our land for ever. With this potash there is also a great amount of calcium salts, another valuable fertiliser, with added uses in the paper-making and paint industries.

Most people when asked what the sea contained would say: 'Salt.' It is there in tremendous quantities, but other substances are also present in comparable proportion, and are infinitely more valuable. Sea-water will not poison anybody, even though some 250 tons of arsenic are suspended in every cubic mile of water.

This is merely the beginning of the list. In a cubic mile of water there are 1000 tons of fluorine, the chemical used in the plastics industry and for the fluids in most refrigerators; 10,000 tons of iodine; 45 tons of silver; nearly as much copper; and 20 tons each of zinc and lead. All of these substances are those which our industries must have and find difficulty in obtaining.

UNTAPPED WEALTH FROM BRITAIN'S SEAS

PROBABLY even more valuable, however, than the substances the sea holds is latent power of the sea, hitherto a menace, but soon to be a servant. There are two forms of energy available.

The first is tidal energy. The idea has fascinated engineers for at least a century, and as long ago as 1860 there were schemes to harness the powerful tides of the Severn estuary. There is now an official scheme which will be put in hand when economic restrictions on capital expenditure are relaxed. The engineers responsible calculate that the Severn barrage power-plant will produce 2207 million kilowatt-hours of electricity a year—about one-tenth of the total amount generated in the whole of Great Britain in 1938. At its peak output the 32 hydro-turbine alternators would have twice the power capacity of the London generating station at Battersea. The cost of the Severn scheme has been estimated at £47,000,000, and it would take eight years to build. Of the value of the investment, however, there is no doubt. Its saving in coal would amount to 985,000 tons a year.

The rise and fall of the Severn tides is about forty feet. Smaller changes in other areas still make tide harness well worth while. In the Wash, for example, damming would be simple, while in Scotland the strong currents and tremendous force of the Atlantic rollers make small power-plants using the channels between islands an attractive proposition.

A still more remarkable scheme for using the energy of the sea concerns the industrial utilisation of the difference in temperature between the deep and surface water. This energy is inexhaustible.

Britain's proximity to the Gulf Stream makes such a scheme a possibility, for the

surface water in some areas changes very little from about 60° Fahr., while the deeper one goes the nearer freezing-point is reached. But the first thermal-power plants are likely to be in tropical waters, where a surface temperature of 80° Fahr. can be found.

France has pioneered work on this project. Two engineers, Messieurs Nizery and Beau, are preparing a power-station on the Ivory Coast, near Abidjan. The principle is to take the surface water into a retort, where the slight steam actuates a condensing turbine, the exhaust vapour from which is cooled by water taken from a depth of 1300 feet and at a distance of 2½ miles from the coast. The temperature of this water is 46° Fahr. The cold water is drawn through an 8-foot pipe and causes warm water to be sucked in, turning the turbine by its steam. The whole power-producing plant is maintained under as perfect a vacuum as possible, and once started the whole process will continue indefinitely.

Careful calculations by the French engineers have shown that commercial success can be guaranteed because of the very low maintenance costs. In addition the thermal-power station has one great advantage over the tidal generating plant—it works steadily day in and day out, and in tropical areas the variations in surface temperatures would never be great enough to affect production. This is not, of course, the case with tidal plants, which have two dead periods, at absolute high and absolute low tide.

All these schemes to wrest wealth and power from the sea are in their infancy, but all of them are possible—and most are already proved to be commercially feasible. The sea, so long Britain's guardian, will soon be a source of wealth as well.

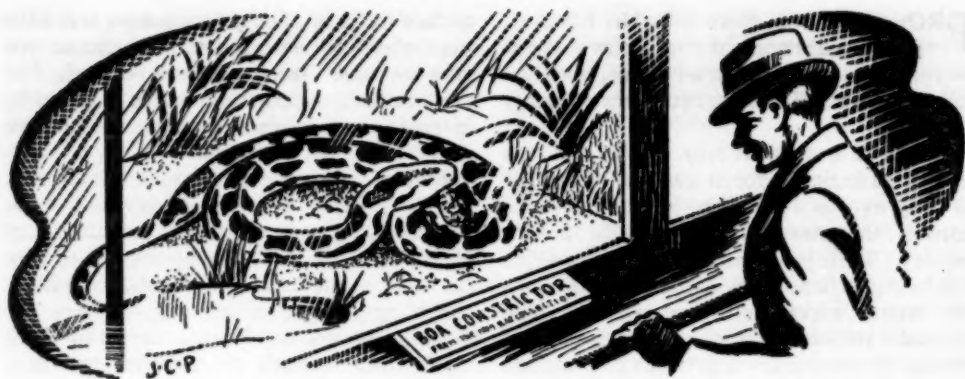
The River

*My boat upon the water's breast
Is lapped and lullabied to rest,
The willows hang a hundred veils
And on my head heap heavy trails.*

*Yet do I fear the round blue night
That tells me I must take my flight,
For where dim tunnels draw the keel,
What may not voyaging reveal!*

*Willow and wave in shy caress
Swayed by the night-wind's waywardness,
And little laps that fold and part
And lick the headlands of the heart.*

LILLIAS MAGDALENE SCOTT.



The Boa

ANDREW CRUICKSHANK

FRED RAE was a stage-hand who was always immaculately dressed. In 1951 he was a little, withered old man whose great days in the theatre, when he had had the full running of a show in his hands, were over, but he loved the theatre, and was prepared to serve it in any humble capacity. He was an example, at all events in his dress, and he would grumble at the flamboyant untidiness of the young men in the theatre, and would say that it would never have done in the days of Mansfield and Drew. Everyone wondered how Fred had managed to retain his elegance through the years, because he had not been overwhelmingly successful. He dressed more like a business man than a stage-hand, he was so fastidious in his suits, and twice a year, on Easter Day and Lincoln's Birthday, he would appear in a new one.

It was in 1927 that Fred's fastidiousness in dress first became apparent, and it happened as the result of a conversation in a speak-easy in New Orleans. Fred was the stage-carpenter of a New York play on tour in America, and he was sitting with a friend of his, another stage-carpenter, who was temporarily out of a job, and was filling in the time working with a local circus. The circus was disbanding, and the talk was gloomy and fitful. It was a

particularly bitter time, as the first vein-like cracks of the Great Depression were appearing, and the theatre was as usual feeling the blow first.

'Would you like a boa-constrictor, Fred?' It happened in a pause. The remark was thrown out to fill it.

Fred looked at his friend. He was a thoroughly reliable, serious craftsman, not given to humour. 'What do you mean?' said Fred.

'Would you like a boa-constrictor?'

It appeared that the owner of the boa, a middle-aged woman, was tired of carrying it around as a subsidiary to her performance with less venomous but more active snakes and wanted to get rid of it. Fred thought for a moment, then, as though it were the most casual thing in the world he was doing, he accepted it. 'Yes, I'll have it,' he said.

His friend nodded, and led him away to meet the owner. She was a big woman, who towered over Fred, who was very small. She apologised for not being able to let him have the box in which the reptile lived, but no doubt, as Fred was a stage-carpenter, he could arrange for something. Fred agreed, and had a strong box made with powerful hinges, to which the boa, asleep, was transferred, and

for the next three months it travelled round with the properties of the show until the tour ended.

When Fred returned to New York he leased a room in the basement of the house where he lived, and with the utmost secrecy the boa was installed in it. As Fred explained, he needed a place to store his tools, which was reasonable enough considering his job, and as he had a lot of tools he needed a big box. That was in 1927.

Then came the Depression and for a time Fred could get no work. He discovered that a boa-constrictor is the most considerate of reptiles to have in the house; it slept most of the time. When it woke, it had a mighty hunger, which Fred learned to satisfy quickly. Then it went to sleep again, and in its slumbers it sloughed its skin. Fred was poor, and he needed a suit, for, as everyone knows, stage-carpenters and undertakers are the most soberly dressed people in their station. He had a property in the skin of the boa. And when Fred had timidly removed the skin from the box—he had a pair of high thick leather gloves for the purpose—he decided to take it to a taxidermist, who was surprised into giving him 80 dollars for it.

Fred was delighted. He bought a suit for 40 dollars, and he recovered his self-respect. Although there was no affection between Fred and his boa—it never had a name—Fred felt a certain gratitude to the reptile that gave so of its bounty, and as the years passed and things improved he came to regard the boa as the provider of his suits. Instead of one, he bought two a year, and he might have gone on doing so to the end of his days if it had not been for the curiosity of an elderly spinster who had a room in the house where Fred lived.

THE year was 1951 and Fred was working as a humble stage-hand with a play in New York. One morning he was in his basement wondering when the boa would wake, for it was getting near its time, and he was calculating what chickens and rabbits he would need to feed it. On the night that the boa woke, Fred could be seen hurrying through the streets of New York loaded with chickens and rabbits, only he took good care that he was not seen, for the boa was still his secret. Fred was thinking of this when he suddenly remembered the matinee. He looked

at his watch and saw that he would just reach the theatre in time to report. In a panic he hurried from the room. And he forgot to lock the door. Nothing would have happened if the spinster had not been curious, and certainly there would have been no incident if the boa had not decided to wake up. During the afternoon, while Fred was at the theatre, the spinster went down to the basement with a boxful of rubbish. As she passed the boa's room she heard a great bumping and thrashing coming from it. The boa had woken up and was hungry. She tried the handle of the door, and it turned. She walked in and could see nothing except the enormous box in the corner of the room, but she could hear the furious noise, and she screamed.

When Fred reached home after the evening performance he saw a group of people standing round his house, and he wondered what the fuss was about. There was a fire-engine, and he could see some policemen. When the spinster saw him, her eyes dilated, and she pointed at Fred. 'There he is,' she yelled.

The group stared at Fred for a moment, then surrounded him. Apart from the police and the firemen, and the neighbours who were there out of curiosity and terror, there was a small deputation from the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The spinster had been very busy. Then they all shouted at Fred, and they all asked the same question. 'What have you got in your basement?'

Fred went white, he nearly fainted. His throat was very dry. Slowly and with difficulty he told them what it was and how it got there, and how he had tended his boa-constrictor for over twenty years. When he had finished, there was a silence such as falls on people at the end of a tiring day. The leader of the firemen coughed and thought it was time he returned to his station: it was obviously not a fire. The deputation from the A.S.P.C.A. drew apart and held a huddled conference: they submitted that by no extension of their code could a boa-constrictor be considered a domestic animal, and they wandered off. The police briskly made out a summons charging Fred with harbouring dangerous animals, and left. The landlord, after a pithy delivery of what he thought of Fred, and in spite of Fred's excellent reputation as a tenant, ungratefully gave him notice to quit. The neighbours, led by the spinster, trailed off to their beds in wonder and silent

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

admiration. Fred was left alone, tired, desperate, very old, and somehow he felt naked.

WHEN Fred's neighbours had recovered from their first wonder, they were full of indignation at the action of the police. Indeed, they were so convinced of Fred's essential innocence, and believing that the magistrate would recognise it too, that they persuaded him to hire a lawyer so that his case might not be misrepresented in court. It might be expensive, but it would be worth it. So Fred was persuaded to engage a lawyer at the fee of 50 dollars. He assured the lawyer that he'd done no wrong, he'd looked after the boa for twenty years, and it had harmed no one. The lawyer looked suspiciously at Fred for a moment, but accepted his case.

The court was crowded when Fred's case was called. He appeared a trifle timid, but was buoyed up by the confidence of his neighbours, and was convinced in his heart of his innocence. He had a respectful belief in the abiding justice of the law. And when the charge was read and the magistrate smiled at him and asked if it was true, he smiled back and admitted that it was.

'How did you harbour this boa-constrictor?'

A picture of the boa flashed before Fred's eyes. For perhaps the only time in his life he saw it as a possession; it was his. He explained that he kept it in a box, had done so for years, and that it had never harmed a soul. The magistrate and the lawyer smiled at each other. Would Fred agree that it was dangerous? The magistrate was smiling at him again. No, Fred wouldn't agree. He said it had harmed no one. Suppose it had escaped? Fred thought that was a foolish question; it never had escaped.

The magistrate and the lawyer were smiling at each other again. Fred was beginning to suspect that his lawyer wasn't on his side at all. The two kept nodding and looking at Fred as if he were slightly unbalanced and needed careful handling. And when, at length, the evidence had been assembled, and the magistrate, still smiling, turned to Fred and invited him to accept his judgment—a

small fine of 70 dollars—as though it were a benediction, Fred was certain that there was a conspiracy against him, and he was very angry. To make matters worse, the magistrate took it upon himself to dispose of the boa, and said that he would ask the advice of the Brooklyn zoo.

Fred left the court. He was furious and empty. He was angry at the verdict, and sad at the ending of his association with the boa. He had got so used to it. 'The damned thing has cost me 120 dollars,' he muttered, but the tone was not vicious.

IN due time a party arrived from the Brooklyn zoo armed with rifles. Why with rifles will never be known! Whether they expected trouble from the boa or from the neighbours is uncertain, for they were left in no doubt as to their nature among men for removing a poor man's pet. But the boa was firmly removed from the basement, and was carried to the waiting wagon through the crowd that had assembled, and so to the zoo.

It was some time before Fred recovered from his loss, and the evil thoughts he had about the ways of men. When he did, he thought one Sunday that he would make a trip to the Brooklyn zoo. He visited the lions and paused to view the monkeys before he could make up his mind to visit the Reptile House. The house was bathed in a cathedral light and smelt vaguely of fish. He had some difficulty in distinguishing the exhibits, between what was a reptile and what was a log. Then he saw it. In bold capitals over a case larger than the others he saw the words: BOA-CONSTRUCTOR. Fred was amazed at what he saw in the case. There were runnels of sand and tiny boulders. Over this there hung a deep green foliage that waved gently like inverted seaweed. It resembled the bottom of the sea. Stretched over the length of the case like a hose-pipe painted by a fastidious hand lay a huge boa-constrictor. Fred could scarcely have recognised his boa in these surroundings if he had not seen a small notice below. He smiled. Underneath the case, printed on a small white slip, were the words:

FROM THE FRED RAE COLLECTION.

Twice-Told Tales

XXXII.—*Victorian Lie*

[From *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* of August 1853]

'**M**ABEL,' said my aunt, facing me sternly, and speaking with solemn emphasis—'you are lowered for ever in my eyes! Go!' she added, with a gesture as if the sight of me were intolerable: 'I shall never have confidence in you again.'

I ran out of the room into the garden through the side-door, which always stood open in hot weather; but my cousins were at play on the lawn; so I flew on in the bitterness of my wounded spirit, until I found the shade and quiet I wanted under a hoary apple-tree, which stood in the neighbouring orchard. Under its spreading branches I threw myself down.

I have a vivid impression of the aspect and 'feel' of that summer afternoon. The heat was intense; even the ground on which I lay seemed to burn the bare arms crossed beneath my humbled head. I knew there was not a grateful cloud in the radiant sky above me; I felt there was not a breath of wind stirring, not enough even to rustle the thick leaves of the orchard trees. The garish brilliancy, the sultry stillness, oppressed me almost more than I could bear. If I could have hidden myself from the sight of the sun, if I could have cheated my own consciousness, I would have gladly done so. I will not believe the world held at that moment a more wretched being than I was.

For, let me at once tell the reader, I was no victim of injustice or misconstruction; the words with which I had been driven from the house were justified by what I had done. I was fourteen years of age, I had been carefully and kindly educated, none knew better than I the differences between right and wrong; yet in spite of age, teaching, and the intellect's enlightenment, I had just been guilty of a gross moral transgression: I had been convicted of a falsehood; and, more than that, it was no impulsive lie escaping me in some exigency, but a deliberate one, and calculated to do another hurt. The whole house knew of it—servants, cousins, and all. My shame was

complete. 'What shall I do? what will become of me?' I cried aloud. 'I shall never be happy again!'

It seemed so to me. I had lost my position in the house where I had been so favoured and happy; I had compromised my character from that day henceforward. I, who had meant to do such good in the world, had lost my chance; for that sin clinging to my conscience, the remembrance of which I should read in everybody's face and altered manner, would make effort impossible. My aunt had lost all confidence in me—that was terrible; but what was worse, I had lost all confidence in myself. I saw myself mean, ungenerous, a liar! I had no more self-respect. When my cousins whispered together about me, or the servants nodded and smiled significantly, I should have nothing to fall back upon. Why, I was what they thought me; I could not defy their contempt, but must take it as my due. I might get angry, but who would mind my anger? A thousand thoughts exasperated my anguish.

I was very fond of reading, and had a liking for heroic biographies. Noble actions, fine principles, always awoke a passionate enthusiasm in my mind, caused strong throbs of ambition, and very often my aunt had lent a kind ear to the outpouring of such emotions. The case would be altered now. I might read, indeed, but such feelings I must henceforth keep to myself: who would have patience to hear me thus expatiate? I was cut off from fellowship with the good.

I rose up from the grass, for my state of mind would bear the prone attitude no longer, and leaning against the tree, looked around me. Oh! the merry games I had had in this orchard. The recollection brought a flood of bitter tears to my eyes—I had not cried before—for I was sure that time was past; I should never have another. 'Never, never!' I cried, wringing my hands; 'I shall never have the heart to play again, even if they would play with me. I am another girl now!'



Anthills

A. TURNER

THE ants will soon be swarming in the woods again. All through the winter their hills have been motionless dark humps of loose twiggly earth. With the spring sunshine they will wake into life, and simmer like a pot bubbling from fire beneath. They make me think of ants in the Philippines, where I went when I was a youngster.

Really, the voyage attracted me more than the job. I was quite surprised to find the other side of the world much like this side—the same sky, the same clouds, the same sun, though much fiercer, seeming to have weight in its beams. The people different, of course—small, coffee-coloured men and women, who spoke in soft, rather pretty, voices, and, at that time, looked upon Englishmen as superior beings, or pretended to, even if they didn't feel that way. We made no attempt to dispel such ideas.

After about six months I got a few days' leave and, with another man, decided to make a trip into the interior to see something of the life of the people. Life in the tropics lacks most of the facilities for taking a holiday which we are accustomed to at home, and George pointed out we might never have the chance again.

We took some food with us, mosquito-nets

to put over our faces, and boarded one of the little market steamers on which natives were returning to their village fifteen miles up-river after selling their fruits and vegetables in the port. We squatted among them on the open deck, feeling rather out of place. Light from the water seemed to come up hot as the sun. Very soon our faces became brick-red. We were glad when we reached the little stone landing-stage and went ashore.

ON the launch we made the acquaintance of a native who knew a little English, and he offered to act as guide for part of our journey. He found us a springless iron-tyred native cart, and we bumped off over a rough track, with the sun blazing down, and the green tropical vegetation glittering under its beams. At intervals we passed native houses, nipa-thatched, and standing on poles about five feet above the ground. Under them pigs and chickens scratched about, while sometimes little brown native children lay in the dust, and stared at us with wide-open black eyes.

After about an hour we reached the village where our driver lived, and he refused to go any further. With some difficulty our guide

found another cart, and we went on to a village where the guide knew the headman, to whom he introduced us as important travellers who wished to spend a few days studying plant-life in the district. Of course, we weren't anything of the kind, but we let it pass. The grizzled old headman seemed pleased to have the honour of entertaining such distinguished guests and showed us a shack which, the guide explained, we could occupy for as long as we liked. It was pleasantly cool after the burning sun. The thatched roof sloped down within a foot or so of the floor, which was of bamboo, yielding to the tread. At first we were rather afraid we might go through it to the ground beneath, which we could see through the interstices between the canes.

The guide left, explaining he had to return to his own village, the headman bowed himself away, and we were alone.

'WELL, here we are,' said George, looking round rather disconsolately, 'though I'm hanged if I know where we are. We're seeing the country all right, though.'

'That's what we came for,' I returned almost as dubiously, for, after all, we could have seen much the same scenery under easier conditions, and nearer the port.

'I was thinking it was rather silly to come right out here,' he went on. 'The country's not settled. It wouldn't be much fun if some of those ladrones turned up unexpectedly.'

That was just like him. The 'ladrones,' as they were called, were wild bands ranging the country, plundering people who didn't help them, and generally playing merry hell with their enemies. We knew of them, but it was one thing to talk of them in the security of the port, and quite another in this straggling native village in the bush, with the green central mountain-range where they had their hideouts not very far away.

The sun set, the twelve-hours night of the tropics came quickly, heavy and warm as though a blanket lay over the green land. The air filled with the drone of innumerable insects, which flew or hopped or crawled everywhere—not pleasant when you haven't got much to keep them off you, and you know that some of them sting ferociously.

The Southern Cross came up over the trees. Lightning flickered continually, broad flashes which lit up everything bright as day, but with a bluish glare and without thunder.

We sat and smoked on the stair-ladder of our shack. There was nothing else to do, and we both decided anyone can have life in the tropics in exchange for life in England at the worst time of the year. In other words, we were thoroughly bored and fed up.

We ate some of the food we'd brought, and after a few hours made ourselves as comfortable as we could on the floor of the shack and went to sleep, quite determined to return to civilisation by first cart the next morning—if we could find one.

I SLEEP rather heavily. George awakened me, shaking me furiously by the shoulder. 'What's the matter? What's up?' I asked, only half-awake.

'Your blasted ladrones. They're here. Listen!'

There were shouts and screams, then a few gunshots at the other end of the village. We snatched on the light clothing we had discarded and went down the ladder. There were figures moving among the shacks. The short heavy swords called bolos, which the natives use for all kinds of work, flashed in the lightning. In a few moments we were surrounded by a savage-looking horde, some with rifles which they levelled at us, some shaking bolos close to our throats.

In a story-book, of course, we should have asserted our superiority as Englishmen, knocked the rascals over like ninepins and overawed them with our might—but that's only in story-books. It's different when there are knives close to your throat, and the odds are about 30 to 1 against you. The lightning lit up their savage faces. It showed the frightened villagers, the native shacks on piles, the background of tropical vegetation and seemed to accentuate the fact that we were very far from home, and the nearest policeman probably at least fifty miles away.

We both thought we were done for, but the rifles weren't fired, the bolos didn't slash us. Someone in authority seemed to give an order, the band round us opened on one side, with gestures they indicated we were to march, and we moved off through the bamboo-groves into the bushy country.

WE couldn't speak to our captors, and they made no attempt to speak to us, only grimaced and shook their bolos un-

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

pleasantly close to our heads. The heavy heat weighed on us. We were drenched in perspiration, but we had to go on, with occasional short intervals for rest.

When morning came, we found ourselves on a grassy plain, with here and there what appeared to be massive jagged rocks standing up out of the soil. The rest of the band came up with us. With them we saw the headman of the village being almost dragged along and evidently in a state of terror.

The great rocks, or rather what we had taken to be rocks, proved to be huge anthills. We drew close to one. With their bolos some of the men broke open one of the cones, and, bound hand and foot, the headman was thrust into the hollow, swarming with reddish insects, until only his head showed above the swarm.

There was nothing we could do. Indeed, we thought we were to be treated in the same way, but after a short interval, during which the gang appeared to indulge in taunting the wretched man, we moved on again, leaving him in the blazing sun with the tiny insects swarming over him.

We were marching towards the central

mountain-range. In the drowsy heat of the tropic noon we halted at last near a little stream, where we were able to quench our thirst. Some fruit was thrown to us. Most of the men lay down to sleep, leaving four guards with rifles to watch us. We were so exhausted, I think we both slept heavily. When the sun was getting low we started off again, and kept on till dark. The stars came out, the lightning flickered, we lay on the hot dry ground indifferent to insects, dead-beat.

We slept, we wakened, we wondered when we should be forced to march again. Slowly we realised that we were alone, that in the darkness the gang had silently moved away.

The stream to some extent guided us. We followed it down the slope, drinking whenever we wanted to. Late in the morning a party of mounted constabulary found us, gave us food, and took us back to the raided village. It had been a case of revenge, they said. After some difficulty, we found the open plain and the anthills, and came to the big one. We didn't recognise it at first. Another cone had been built where the one had been broken open. It seethed and bubbled with activity, but that was all.

Plant versus Animal

HERBERT MACE

THE fact that plants are fixed in one place and appear to have no organs of sense or feeling deludes us into the belief that they play only a passive part in the struggle for survival; the restless animal, continually seeking food, seems to be the aggressive party. Science, however, proves that the apparent passivity of the vegetable masks a deliberate offensive, aimed sometimes at the very life of its enemy.

THE most widespread protective measure adopted by plants is the storage of food

material out of the animal's reach at critical times. This plan serves a dual purpose, for it is also effective against the rigours of weather. In biennial and perennial plants there is usually a seasonal shedding of leaves and temporary repose of the circulation. In temperate regions low temperature and in hot dry countries inadequate moisture are the conditions which render necessary this temporary suspension of vital functions. On the return of genial conditions, activity starts with a vigour corresponding to the amount of food material stored in the previous growing period.

PLANT VERSUS ANIMAL

Roots provide interesting examples of the way this storage is carried out. During the resting period, the plant has to face the danger of having its food material taken by animals rendered more alert by shortage of the leaves which form their normal support. The simplest form of storage is that of the turnip, in which an enlargement takes place at the junction of stem and root; yet anyone who has seen sheep or goats nibbling down turnips till nothing but the thin taproot is left must realise that this is not the most efficient system, and the carrot type of root, which tapers gradually to a point, offers more resistance, because the animal finds it increasingly difficult to gnaw the root as it proceeds, until it is more to its advantage to look for another root.

In the endogens a similar kind of storage is seen in the familiar bulb. In this type of growth, opposition to attack by animals takes two forms—the formation of the bulb, in many instances below ground, and the toughening of its outer and older layers.

The most widespread and persistent forms of plant life are the grasses, whose predominance is largely due to two outstanding features. Their roots are fibrous, but numerous, so that the food-supply is stored, not in one monstrous packet, but in numerous portions, with the result that there is always a chance of some part surviving the attack. This enables storage to be effected without undue penetration of the soil, and therefore the plant can respond more quickly to the influence of returning warmth and moisture. The rapidity with which grass, apparently burnt up completely, becomes green after a few light showers is notable.

The shape of the leaf has also great protective value for grass. Not only does the long narrow blade, held more or less erect, permit light to penetrate down to the bottom of the stem and so keep the entire foliage in active production, but also almost any amount of the blade can be cut off without material injury to the plant.

Trees, shrubs, and other plants which maintain a permanent stem carry only a small portion of reserve food below ground, most of it being added to the stem in concentric layers. As each layer is added, the one below, or, in endogens, above, loses its vitality and is no longer available as food, though still serving as support. The thin protective skin which forms over existing stems is not adequate

protection against those animals which are specially adapted as gnawers, and two methods of protection have been evolved. One is the formation of layers of unpalatable innutritious bark and the other is the secretion of the bitter substances which not many animals can tolerate.

The tree is, indeed, an outstanding example of the way in which the vegetable can gain complete ascendancy over the animal. It is the longest-lived form of life. Not only has it succeeded in protecting the food stored during the quiet season, but, by pushing out new growth higher and higher, it also puts the active leaves out of the reach of the normal vertebrate animal. The competition which has taken place in this direction is exceedingly interesting to contemplate. The still-living giraffe is one terrestrial creature remaining to show how the animal strove to meet the situation by increasing stature, but the immense size which trees attain seems to indicate that animals reached much higher stature than the giraffe before they were beaten. There is, in fact, abundant proof of the former existence of gigantic herbivorous animals, which were probably protagonists in this struggle with the victorious tree. I do not know whether my conjecture is founded on ascertained facts, but I believe this simple habit of trees may account for other animal developments besides increase of stature. Watching domestic fowls jumping up to reach leaves or fruit, one is led to wonder whether this is not a stage in retrogression from flight, which was passed in progress to it!

A COMMON means of protection is the development of thorns and prickles. There is a fundamental difference between the two, which is worth notice. The thorn is a hardened growing-point of the plant, directly connected with the inner layers of stem, while the prickle is a modified hair growing on the skin. The thorn is more specially identified with young growth, and in some trees thorns are less freely produced on the upper parts. Prickles are the extreme form of hairy outgrowths which are common to vast numbers of plants and they are specially associated with plants with weak stems, serving the dual purpose of protecting the plant from animals and of acting as hooks by which it can climb up the branches of a stouter species to reach the essential light.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

A more subtle means of protection consists in the formation of substances poisonous to animals. Under this head may be included not only those substances which are fatal, but also others which produce unpleasant effects, such as vomiting or pain, and those merely distasteful. Sometimes there is nothing to warn the animal of its danger. Even in the abundance of good pasture cows will often eat greedily of the fatal yew. On the other hand, there are plants which certain animals will not touch, though no harm ensues should they do so. Goats will eat the common stinging-nettle, rejected by most mammals, but they reject the dead-nettles, hedge stachys, and black horehound when pastured. If these are present in a mixture fed to them in the stall, they eat them with the other material without harm. When they have a chance of selection, the smell of these rank plants appears to be distasteful. This modifies the old belief that animals avoid instinctively what is harmful. Plants most likely to be relished need most protection and for such plants objectionable smell or taste are the most effectual safeguards. Plants such as belladonna and aconite, fatal to many animals, are not by any means common, so that development of this property to the full extent carries no special advantage. The effectiveness of this means of protection is well seen in the buttercup, which blisters the mouth and is rarely eaten by cattle. Its abundance under conditions in which scarcely any plants but grasses and clovers survive is abundant testimony to the value of this method of protection.

From protection of self to protection of race is only a step, and the principles which govern the storage of reserve food or the protection of vital parts operates in the production of seed and fruit. Plants of short duration specialise in rapid growth and seed production, wasting no material in storage. As soon as drought threatens, the annual hastens to produce and scatter its seed and secures the race, though

the parent itself be consumed in the subsequent scarcity.

The perennial is not so readily able to flower and fruit, but its method of securing future generations is none the less studied. Its flowers are usually produced in profusion at a time when abundance of leaves renders them more or less secure against larger animals. Its fruits are provided with many and various devices by which they can compel the animal to transport them long distances. Wings, hooks which cling to the fur, and other devices are familiar, but the most interesting are those which actually turn to account the appetite of the animal. Countless seeds are surrounded by two coats—the outer, a soft appetising pulp, readily consumed by birds and mammals; the inner, hard and resistant even to the acids of animal digestion, preserving the vital germ uninjured, to be cast forth on the ground, perhaps many miles from the parent plant.

THE struggle between plant and animal remains active, though perhaps its most violent phase has passed. The recuperative power of grass enables it to feed an endless number of herbivorous animals without harm to itself and the tree has long since beaten out of the field all its vertebrate antagonists. The strongest adversary the plant now faces is the invertebrate insect, which, by its extraordinary power of multiplication, seems at times as though it would annihilate vegetation. In the height of summer foliage a mighty oak may be stripped of every leaf by an army of caterpillars, while an invasion of locusts can, in a few hours, devastate an entire countryside. The never-ceasing fight goes on, the nature of the attack changing as the attacked evolves new means of parrying it, but, in the long run, the vegetable must triumph, if the animal also is to survive, for as surely as the plant vanished would the animal perish with it.

Risks

*O woolly lambs that frisk
When done with drink and sleep,
Too blithe to see your risk
Of turning into sheep!*

*O sheep no longer brisk—
Or portly ewe or ram—
Too dense to see your risk
Of turning into 'Lamb'!*

DOREEN KING.



The Pepper-Tree

DAL STIVENS

MY father often spoke about the pepper-tree when we were kids, and it was clear it meant a lot to him. It stood for something—like the Rolls Royce he was always going to buy. It wasn't what he said about the pepper-tree—my father had no great gift for words—but how he said it that counted. When he spoke of the pepper-tree at Tullama, where he had been brought up, you saw it clearly—a monster of a tree with long shawls of olive-green leaves in a big, generous country town backyard. 'A decent backyard—none of your city pocket-handkerchief lots,' my father said. There were berries on the tree that turned from green to pink, with waxlike covers which you could unpick and get the sticky smell of them all over your fingers. In this spanking tree there was always, too, a noisy traffic of sparrows and starlings fluttering and hopping from branch to branch.

When we lived at Newtown in Sydney I used to look for pepper-trees when my father took me out for a walk on Sunday afternoons. 'Look, there's a pepper-tree,' I'd say to him whenever I saw one with its herringbone leaves.

'By golly, boy, that's only a little runt of a tree,' my old man would say. 'They don't do so well in the city. Too much smoke, by golly.

You ought to see them out west where I come from.'

MY father was a tall, thin man with melancholy brown eyes and the soul of a poet. It was the poet in him that wanted to own a Rolls Royce one day. 'First our own house, and then some day, when my ship comes home, I'll buy a Rolls Royce,' he'd say.

Some of his friends thought my old man was a little crazy to have such an ambition. 'What would you do with one of those flash cars, Peter?' they'd tease him. 'Go and live among the swells?'

My father would stroke his long brown moustache, which had only a few bits of white in it, and try to explain, but he couldn't make them understand. He couldn't even get his ideas across to my mother. Only now do I think I understand what a Rolls Royce meant to him. 'I don't want to swank it, as you put it, Emily,' he'd say to my mother. 'No, by golly. I want to own a Rolls Royce because it is the most perfect piece of machinery made in this world. Why, a Rolls Royce—' And then he'd stop, and you could feel him groping for the right words to describe what he felt, and then go on blunderingly with the caress of

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

a lover in his voice, talking about how beautiful the engine was . . .

'What would a garage mechanic do with a Rolls Royce, I ask you!' my mother would say. 'I'd feel silly sitting up in it.'

At such times my mother would give the wood-stove in the kitchen a good shove with the poker, or swish her broom vigorously. My mother was a small plump woman, with brown hair, which she wore drawn tight back from her forehead.

LIKE the pepper-tree, the Rolls Royce symbolised something for my father. He had been born in Tullama in the Mallee. His father was a bricklayer and wanted his son to follow him. But my father had had his mind set on becoming an engineer. When he was eighteen, he had left Tullama and come to the city and got himself apprenticed to a mechanical engineer. He went to technical classes in the evening. After two years his eyes had given out on him. 'If I had had some money, things might have been different, by golly,' my father told me once. 'I could have gone to the university and learnt things properly. I could have become a civil engineer. I didn't give my eyes a fair go. I went to classes five nights a week and studied after I came home.'

After his eyes went, my father had to take unskilled jobs, but always near machinery. 'I like tinkering, but I had no proper schooling,' he said once.

He knew a lot and, in spite of his eyes, he could only have learnt most of it from books. He knew all about rocks and how they were formed. He could talk for hours, if you got him started, about fossils and the story of evolution. My mother didn't like to hear him talking about such things, because she thought such talk was irreligious. Looking back now, I'd say that notwithstanding his lack of orthodox schooling my father was a learned man. He taught me more than all the teachers I ever had at high-school. He was a keen naturalist, too.

JUST before the depression came, when we were living at Newtown, my father had paid one hundred pounds off the house. He was forty-seven years old then. I was twelve. 'By golly, we'll own the house before we know where we are,' he said.

'Will we?' said my mother. 'At a pound a week we have twelve years to go—unless we win Tatts.'

'You never know what may turn up,' said my old man cheerfully.

'I have a good idea, what with people losing their jobs every day.'

'I haven't lost mine,' my father said, 'and, what's more, if I do, I have a way of making some money.'

'I suppose it's another of your inventions, Peter? What is it this time, I ask you?'

'Never you mind,' said my father. But he said it gently.

One of my mother's complaints was that my father was always losing money on the things he tried to invent. Another was that he was always filling the backyard up with junk. 'What can you do with these pocket-handkerchief lots?' my father would say. 'Now, when I was a nipper at Tullama we had a decent backyard—why it was immense—it was as big—' He'd stop there, not being able to get the right word.

AUCTION SALES, according to my mother, were one of my father's weaknesses. He could never resist anything if it looked cheap, even if he had no use for it, she'd say. Soon after my old man had told my mother he had something in mind to make some money, he went away early one Sunday morning. He came back about lunch-time in a motor-lorry. On the back of the Ford was a two-stroke kerosene engine. I came running out. 'I've bought it, Joe, by golly,' he told me. He had, too. Both engine and lorry. 'Dirt-cheap. Forty quid the lot,' he said. 'Ten quid down, boy, and ten bob a week.'

My mother cut up when she heard. 'Wasting money when it could have gone into the house, Peter.'

'This'll pay the house off in no time, by golly,' my father said. 'And buy a lot of other things, too.'

I knew by the way he looked up and over my mother's head he was thinking of the Rolls Royce, which to him was like a fine poem or a great symphony of Beethoven.

All that day he was very excited, walking round the engine, standing back to admire it, and then peering closely at it. He started it running and stopped it continually all the afternoon. Every night when he came home from the garage during the next week he'd go

THE PEPPER-TREE

first thing and look at the engine. He had some plan in his mind but wouldn't tell what it was at first. 'Wait and see, Joe,' he'd say. 'You'll see all right.'

He didn't let me into his secret for over a week, although I knew he was bursting to tell someone. In the end, he drew me aside mysteriously in the kitchen one night, when my mother was in the bedroom, and whispered: 'It's an invention for cleaning out underground wells, boy.'

'For cleaning out wells?'

'Underground wells.'

He listened to hear if my mother was coming back. 'I'm rigging a light out there to-night, boy,' he whispered. 'Come out later and I'll show you.'

My father's idea, he explained later, was to clean underground wells in country towns by suction. You pushed a stiff brush on the end of the pipe down the sides and along the bottom of underground wells. The pipe sucked up the silt and you didn't lose much water from the well. 'Every country town has half-a-dozen underground wells, boy,' he said. 'The banks and one or two of the wealthier blokes in the town. Just like it was in Tullama. There's money in it, because you can clean the well out without losing too much water. It's a gold-mine.'

It sounded good to me. 'When do you start?' I asked.

'Soon, my golly,' he said. 'The job at the garage won't spin out much longer.'

He was right about that, but until the day she died my mother always had a sneaking idea that the old man had helped to give himself the sack. It was early in 1930 when the old man set out in the lorry, heading out west.

'You've got to go to the low rainfall districts,' he said.

'Like Tullama?' I said.

'Yes, like Tullama, by golly.'

I started thinking of the pepper-tree then. 'Will you go to Tullama and see the pepper-tree?'

My father stroked his long straggling moustache. Into his eyes came that look like when he was thinking or talking about the Rolls. He didn't answer me for a bit. 'By golly, yes, boy, if I go there.'

west from Sydney and I followed the towns he spoke of in my school atlas. It took him nearly a day on a well, so in the larger towns he might stay over a week; in the smaller, a day or a day and a half.

After he had been away for two months, he still had a good few wells to go before he reached Tullama. You could see that he was heading that way.

'Him and that silly pepper-tree!' said my mother, but she didn't say it angrily. My father was sending her as much as he used to bring home when he worked at the garage.

But in spite of what my mother said about the pepper-tree, she became a bit keen as my father got only two weeks off Tullama. She made a small pin-flag for me to stick on the map. About this time a change came in my father's letters home. At first they had been elated, but now they were quieter. He didn't boast so much about the money he was making or say anything about the Rolls. Perhaps excitement was making him quieter as he got nearer to the pepper-tree, I thought.

'I know what it is,' my mother said. 'He's not getting his proper meals. He's too old to be gallivanting off on his own. I bet he's not cooking proper meals for himself. And without a decent bed to sleep in—only the back of that lorry.'

I thought the day would never come, but soon enough my dad had only one town to do before he would reach Tullama. His letters usually arrived on a Tuesday—he wrote home on the Sundays—but round this time I watched for the mail every day and was late for school three mornings running. When a letter did come, I grabbed it from the postman's hand and hurried inside with it, reading the postmark on the run. It was from Tullama.

'All right, all right, don't rush me, Joe,' my mother said. 'You and your pepper-tree.'

I read over her elbow. There was only one page. There was nothing about the pepper-tree. Dad was well and making money, but he was thinking of returning soon. Only a few lines. I couldn't understand it.

On the next Tuesday there was no letter. Nor on the Wednesday.

On the Thursday my father came home. He turned up at breakfast-time. He gave us a surprise, walking in like that. He said that he had sold the truck and engine and come home by train. He looked tired and shamefaced and somehow a lot older. I saw a deal more white in his moustache. 'The engine was no good,'

SOON after this my father started off. Every week brought a letter from him. He did well, too. He was heading almost due

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

he said. 'It kept breaking down. It cost me nearly all I earned and it was hungry on petrol. I had to sell it to pay back what I borrowed and get my fare home.'

'Oh, Peter,' my mother said, putting her arms round him. 'You poor darling. I knew something was wrong.'

'Mother reckoned it was the food,' I said. 'She reckoned you weren't getting your proper meals.'

'I'll make you a cup of tea, Peter,' my mother said, bustling over to the stove and pushing another piece of wood into it. 'Then I'll get you some breakfast.'

'By golly, that sounds a bit of all right,' my father said then. This was the first time since he had walked in that he had sounded like his old self.

My mother hurried about the kitchen, and my father talked a bit more. 'I thought I was going to do well at first,' he said. 'But the engine was too old. It was always spare parts. It ate up all I earned.'

He talked on about the trip. I had got over my surprise at seeing him walk in and now wanted to know all about the pepper-tree.

'Did you see the pepper-tree, dad?'

'Yes, I saw it all right.'

I stood directly in front of him as he sat at the table, but he was not looking at me but at something far away. He didn't answer for what seemed a long time. 'It was a little runt of a tree, boy—and a little backyard.'

He wouldn't say any more then, and he never spoke of the pepper-tree—or the Rolls—again.

Kintyre's Last Bard and Fox-Hunter

DUGALD MACINTYRE

(His Great-Grandson)

ALAN MACINTYRE—he spelt his Christian name with one 'I'—was the last professional fox-hunter of the Kintyre district, as well as its last bard. Born in 1745, he lived on until 1840. He was notable as a fox-hunter, because he exterminated the foxes of Kintyre, and as a bard, because he wrote a number of songs and poems, and had them compiled into a book. One copy of his rare book of *Orain* ('Songs; 1829') is in my possession, and there is another in the Mackinnon Collection of the University Library, Edinburgh.

Alan had the advantage of education in an age when that was a rare possession. A Campbell on the maternal side, he had been educated by a tutor to his mother's family. His handwriting was very good—it is still to be seen in the old books of the Argyll estate-office—and he was Kintyre's letter-writer, and so it was that Duncan Ban Macintyre came

to him to have his celebrated poems written out. Duncan walked from Edinburgh year after year while he lived, to spend a holiday with his friend Alan, and the two hunted together by day, and worked at the famous poems by night. Duncan considered that Alan spoiled his songs by introducing that unknown quantity grammar into them; but Alan insisted, and Duncan at last gave way. Alan's copies were later recorrected by a minister. Duncan Ban could neither read nor write, and when his book of poems at last came out he was observed by his friend to be trying to read it upside-down. Informed of his mistake, he truthfully remarked: 'I can read it that way as well as the other.'

Alan was Argyll's most famous shot also, and the long Spanish gun which he carried had a history. This is alluded to in Colonel Walter Campbell's book, *My Indian Journal*

KINTYRE'S LAST BARD AND FOX-HUNTER

(1864). The gun was a sister one of that used in the Appin murder. It dated from the 'Fifteen, when a Spanish force reached Scotland, but was disarmed at the fizzle out of the rising. In the 'Forty-five the weapon is said to have killed seven redcoats at Culloden in the hands of an uncle of Alan's who fought on the side of Prince Charles. That uncle had actually a brother serving as a soldier in the army of King George, and this brother feared much that he might be a victim of the family weapon, the peculiar report of which he had recognised from time to time during the battle. When the brothers met again, it turned out that the rebel one had recognised his brother in the ranks of the regulars, and had refrained from shooting him.

ALAN'S long hunts after foxes are legendary. One hunt extended from Glen Barr to Skipness, where at late evening of the day of the hunt a shepherd saw two dark objects in a field behind Skipness Castle. The movements of the two objects invited the shepherd's attention, and he found them to be an utterly exhausted fox, and an equally exhausted hound. When the fox dragged itself a few yards, the hound did the same. The shepherd killed the fox and carried home the exhausted hound in his arms. Alan had followed the chase for miles, but finally lost all trace of his pack. His terriers dribbled home, some on the evening of the day of the hunt and some next day. The famous hound Gasgeach was lost to his master for a fortnight, however, when news filtered through to Glen Barr that a big hound had been found at Skipness. That hunt is really the foundation of many stories of long Highland hunts after foxes, and it must have covered over thirty miles.

Another long hunt, quite twenty-five miles, was from Carradale Glen to the Mull of Kintyre, the hunted fox being caught by Gasgeach, where the golf bridge now stands near Machrihanish.

ALAN'S reputation as a shot, indeed as *the* shot of his day in Argyll, was only challenged once. There were shooting-matches then, and the conditions were sporting ones. Competitors put down one shilling each as entry-money—a big sum in those days—and had but one shot for their money. The target was of wood, with a black bull's-eye painted

on it, and the nearest bullet-mark to the centre of the bull took the prize, which was something valuable, as, on one occasion, a light fowling-piece, and, on another, a pair of cart-wheels. The shooting position was the uneasy standing one and the distance ninety yards, so there were plenty of misses.

Alan was the usual winner of those matches. His historic weapon threw a round ball with great exactitude, and his confident manner when taking up position for his shot served to discourage his competitors.

Colonel Walter Campbell was also a great shot, and he accompanied Alan to a match which was held in the Island of Jura. The match was on the day before a great deer-shoot, and all the sporting gentry of Argyll were present at it. Colonel Walter Campbell of Skipness was a cousin of Campbell of Jura, and the Laird of Jura provided competitors with their ammunition. When Alan's turn to shoot came, Jura handed him his bullet, and great was the uproar when Alan missed the target altogether. He lodged a protest on the ground that he had been supplied with a defective bullet, and his protest was backed by Colonel Walter Campbell, who also had heard the bullet whining as it pursued an erratic course. Jura laughingly confessed that he had provided the old hunter with a hollow bullet by way of a trick, and offered another sound one, with the right to shoot again. Alan was taking no chances, however, and, ramming home a bullet of his own, he made the shot of the day.

ALAN'S book of poems lies before me. It is black with age and peat-smoke, but it is quite legible.

The 'Song of the Fox in the Mull of Kintyre' is really Alan's best piece. It is a fox, Rory, the red one, of the Mull of Kintyre who sings, and he first complains of Macintyre, whose lean dogs often rave round where he lies in a hollow cave. He confesses to the murder of four sheep and a pet lamb at the Red Stones one night, and, before he flies to the refuge of his cave, expresses his defiance of Macintyre as follows: 'In my den I'll still have mutton if the price of meal should rise. The Ton-bhan and the Aoinean-seilich are the best dens in Kintyre. My children will live there for ever, in despite of Macintyre.' Macintyre's reply is: 'You fox, I hear you have been making a song, but that is all wind,

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

and I will come down and take your head off with my two hands.'

ALAN was ninety-four years of age, but hale and hearty, when a lad who had been carting wrack from the seashore brought him news that he had seen an otter entering a cairn on Glen Barr foreshore. Alan still had his famous breed of fighting mustard-coloured terriers—the ancestors of the White West Highland variety—and he set them at the otter, which refused to bolt. The old hunter's gun was placed against a rock while he crept into the cave to shout encouragement to his dogs. One of them upset the gun in a pool of water and, at that moment, the otter bolted with the terriers hanging on to it. Alan promptly tailed his fighting quarry, but the hanging terriers prevented his knocking its head against a rock, and the otter bit him severely in several places. Those wounds never healed, and Alan died in his arm-chair out in the sun a year later at the age of ninety-five.

ALAN collected the skins of foxes, otters, badgers, martens, and polecats, and dried and cured them. Once or twice a year he walked from Glen Barr to Glasgow with a

bundle of dried skins on his back. Jews were his customers for the skins, and he discovered that if he refused to sell at a low price to one merchant, and went to another shop, a messenger-boy from the first shop arrived at the second shop before him, and the price offered for the skins was the same or lower than what he had been offered in the first instance.

Alan's big hound and perhaps a dozen of terriers consumed a lot of food in a year, and each farmer on his extensive beat had to supply him with so many braxy sheep carcasses yearly for his hungry pack. Farmers were forced also to feed his dogs when he was from home on a hunt, and for his work each paid a certain sum of money annually to the Chamberlain of the Argyll estates.

The farmers' wives of Kintyre, the lairds, and even the Duke of Argyll entertained Alan and his hungry pack when he was on one of his hunts. A clause in the farm leases of the time made it imperative for each farmer to entertain the fox-hunter, and feed his dogs, but, as Alan well knew, his hungry pack was not welcomed about a farmhouse. His salutation to the housewives was: 'Welcome my dogs, or you will not get my news.' That usually saved the situation, for Alan, as a constant traveller, collected all the news of the district.

To a Song-Thrush

*Oh happy bird upon the thorn-tree swinging,
A minstrel throned between the earth and sky,
What gift in song is thy sweet music bringing
To weary-hearted pilgrims passing by?*

*Soft in angelic tones thy voice descending
Breathes forth the story of eternal love,
And human hearts to thy great joy ascending
Seek peace within the song-filled realms above.*

*Say, joyous bird, within thy soul's outpouring
What power enfolds that tender voice of thine?
Yea, thou art evermore, in thy adoring,
A mavis and a minstrel all divine.*

*Sing on, dear one, above our heart's despairing,
Until life's shadowed hours are overpast,
And weary workers through the homeland faring
Find rest within a peace-filled world at last.*

GILBERT RAE.

Science at Your Service

FREEZING OUR DAILY BREAD

A REVOLUTIONARY development now taking place in the American bread industry is the consequence of Rear-Admiral Byrd's Antarctic journeys. On his last expedition he found that bread left in a hut many months previously and covered during the period by several feet of snow had remained perfectly edible. It is now realised that freezing not merely prevents decay of bread but also prevents the loss of fresh texture commonly recognised as staling. Oven-fresh loaves cold-frozen immediately they have been baked will have all the properties of new bread—for better or worse!—even if thawing out does not occur for more than a week. A large bakery in New York has already begun to distribute frozen loaves and rolls. The bread is transported from the bakery in refrigerated vans and sent to shops many miles away to be held there in cold-stores. Much bigger areas of distribution will be made possible by this development, perhaps a more significant commercial point in a country of the size of the United States. Another economic advantage is that Sunday or holiday work by bakers will not be necessary. However, it remains to be seen whether the public response to this 'revolution' is sufficiently encouraging.

THE ADJUSTABLE LAMP

Most lighting is still fixed-point lighting, but for brilliant lighting the adjustable, plugged-in table-lamp is unrivalled for many purposes. One of the most famous lamps of this kind is certainly not new; it was well-established before the war. An entirely British product, it has maintained world-leadership in this specialised field for many years. The flexible arm, unlike the adjustable parts of many other lamps, does not depend upon friction for control or for staying in a stabilised position. The flexibility is derived from balanced springs and the equilibrium attained is so delicate that the lamp is useless until the bulb is fitted, the absence of its weight throwing out the balance of the structure as a whole. Nevertheless, when in use, the poised arm can be set at a

finger-touch and will remain firmly in the selected position. Many different models are manufactured—for the home, offices, engineering factories, surgeries, hairdressing-saloons, etc. The manufacturers originally entered this field not because they were electrical-fittings makers but because they were specialists in spring-making and in equipment that involves springs in its construction.

WASHING-UP BY MACHINE

Mechanisation is pursuing the chore of dish-washing almost as closely as that of clothes-washing. A new British machine is designed to cope with the dish-washing task of small catering establishments or institutions, and will keep pace with the consumption of about 100 meals an hour. The water is heated within the appliance by controlled immersion-heaters. The washing-water emerges at 145° Fahr., but the rinsing water is applied at 190° Fahr., thus ensuring that rapid and thorough drying takes place after the operation. All dirty crockery is placed in a rotating and detachable basket. Below are removable scrap- and filter-trays. The hot-water supply-tanks are made of stainless steel and the finish of the appliance is similar. The space occupied by the machine is 28 inches in width and depth and 40 inches in height.

DOOR-BUFFERS

The nuisance and noise of slammed doors in houses and offices can now be simply and cheaply eliminated. The principle involved in the device is that of a buffer operating against a valve-controlled air-outlet, the buffer having a spring-return. For interior doors a smaller-sized door-buffer is used; it can be fixed with two screws to the underside of the door-frame top. For outside doors, a slightly larger and stronger buffer with a three-screw attachment is fixed to the top of the door itself. In either case the slammed door meets the buffer-head and the force of further impact is immediately dissipated. The metallic construction of both buffers is a zinc casting with a bronze finish.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

PROSPECTING FOR ANTIBIOTICS

Penicillin is a substance with anti-bacterial properties and is produced in the growth of a certain mould organism. Antibiotic substances are by-produced when many other micro-organisms grow—thus, streptomycin, aureomycin, terramycin, and now quite a lengthy list of others have been discovered and developed as medicinal products. It may not be generally known that there is a research station in this country—in Somerset and run by the Medical Research Council—devoted solely to the search for new antibiotics, especially for one that will have specific activity against tuberculosis bacilli. During the late war this research station was a medical research unit for the Navy and facilities were installed in the station for the small-scale production of penicillin; after the war, therefore, it was quite well equipped for antibiotics research, and was eventually taken over for that purpose by the Medical Research Council.

Cultures of micro-organisms are received from the Oxford School of Botany and from a scientific centre in Malaya. These are put through a series of preliminary or screening tests to ascertain their biological activity—as many as forty different strains of bacteria may be used to find out whether the micro-organism produces an anti-bacterial substance in the course of its own development. The most critical test, however, is the use of B.C.G. tubercle bacillus strain as the target bacteria. If an organism is not rejected by these initial tests, research then proceeds on the antibiotic's production by culturing the organism on a larger scale. The best conditions for a good yield of the antibiotic substance are found out. Methods of purifying the antibiotic are also developed. Finally, larger-scale production—larger, at any rate, than is possible in laboratories—is attempted in the wartime factory extension once used for producing penicillin for naval hospitals. Enough material for clinical and biological testing at Oxford is thus made available.

So far a small staff of scientists and assistants has been able to study about a hundred different micro-organisms a year. Of these, perhaps three to four have been found to produce a hopeful antibiotic substance and investigations have been pursued to the final point of larger-scale preparation. Unhappily the promise of these substances has not been fulfilled, usually because of accompanying toxic effects or a failure to be effective in the

body. However, if this prospecting search continues steadily, it is likely that in the end British science will be able to claim the discovery of another antibiotic besides the first, penicillin; for, since penicillin American science would seem to have taken all the leadership in this enormously important field.

DOMESTIC MEASURING-JUG

A new transparent one-pint jug was recently exhibited. Made from the plastic material polystyrene, the jug has one most interesting feature—the upward angling of the four measuring lines (1, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, and $\frac{1}{8}$ -pint); these lines are clearly marked both for horizontal and pouring-angle measurement. That is to say, an accurate amount of liquid can be poured into or out of the jug when measurement is made with the jug in a standing and vertical position; but, with the ends of the measure-lines angled appropriately, it is also possible to dispense $\frac{1}{2}$ -pint or $\frac{1}{4}$ -pint portions with the jug held in a pouring position. Models with lids in ivory, red, blue, or green are available. It is a pleasing example of practical and artistic design.

RUST-PREVENTING ENVELOPES

Last December in these notes the remarkable ability of a particular chemical substance to provide an anti-corrosive atmosphere for adjacent rust-labile objects was discussed. The incorporation of this substance in paper gave wrapping-paper exceptional rust-preventing powers. One of the leading British manufacturers of envelopes is now making a range of packs, the paper of which contains a 'vapour phase inhibitor'—that is, a chemical substance with these unusual properties. These packs or envelopes are suitable for storing small metal or metal-surfaced articles. Within the envelope a non-corrosive atmosphere is set up and any condensed water that forms upon the metal surfaces absorbs the rust-inhibiting substance from the atmosphere. Depending on the grade of paper and method of packing used, protection against corrosion can be obtained for from one to six years.

AN ELECTRIC-BURNER FOR LABORATORIES

No piece of laboratory equipment can be so generally familiar as the Bunsen burner. This gas-fed heating-appliance has held its place through generations of change. A new electric-burner is now available. It works by

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infra-red radiation. The vertical element makes no contact with the flask or other object being heated. A parabolic reflector concentrates as much as 90 per cent of the total radiation at a point above the burner. Temperatures as high as 800° Centigrade are said to be attainable. The heating-up time, so often a factor of delay with electrical heating-apparatus, is only about one minute. The heat can be regulated flexibly. The burner can be used in any position and plugged in wherever a point is available. This seems a most commendable effort to combine the best features of the Bunsen burner with those of electric-heating. One notable advantage is that there is no risk of heat deflection by draughts from doors or windows, often a nuisance with the conventional Bunsen burner and in some circumstances, indeed, a danger. It seems unlikely that the low-cost gas-fed burner will be widely displaced, but for certain laboratories and for many special purposes the new burner will no doubt find favour.

BRITISH PROGRESS WITH ACTH

The ability of cortisone to hold arthritis in check has now become well known. Side by side with the development of this hormone-type drug has been that of ACTH, a drug with very similar properties. Until recently, ACTH has been scarce and supplies used by doctors here have been obtained mainly from the United States. ACTH is produced from animal pituitary glands, originally from pig pituitary glands. A well-known British drug and fine-chemical company has now opened a plant for the production of ACTH from ox pituitaries. This new process is claimed to produce ACTH as good in every way as that derived from pig sources. As a result British production is now capable of supplying any British demand at present foreseeable, and possibly also a surplus amount for export. This is remarkably rapid progress. Only a short time ago world supplies of both ACTH and cortisone were so scarce and costly that few people likely to benefit from them could hope for treatment. It must be said, however, that ACTH, like cortisone, can only

be used under the strictest medical supervision, and accompanying effects often tend to limit treatment.

TELEVISION IN INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS

Television here is still largely thought of in terms of entertainment. In America, closed-circuit television systems have already been considerably introduced into industry. Thus, in continuous steel-casting the pouring of molten steel is a critical operation and it has long been necessary to have a man placed hazardingly close to the mould top to pass signals to the plant operator; to-day, a television-camera suspended above the molten surface in the mould transmits an exact picture on to a viewing-screen on the control-panel of the plant. There are, indeed, a number of such tasks, previously requiring a worker to occupy a high-temperature position, which are now carried out in the U.S. metal industry by closed-circuit television. Stokers in a Chicago power-station are continuously able to see the rate at which the four tall stacks are emitting smoke; ignition conditions in large boilers can also be observed.

A leading British manufacturer of wireless and television equipment has recently entered this new field. A miniature camera with a small tube functioning with lenses of cine-camera type is employed. The total weight of camera and control-unit is less than 100 pounds, and the entire apparatus can be carried in two medium-sized packs by one man. The recommended maximum distance for normal operation between the camera and the control-unit is 300 yards, but signals may be led into the aerial socket of standard television receivers which may be situated at a considerably greater distance from the camera.

A special system has been installed for London bankers. A short tower on the roof of the London head office daily receives signals transmitted from another department ten miles away. By means of this installation visual verification of bank records and signatures on cheques, etc., has taken the place of the much less reliable telephone conversations.

TO CORRESPONDENTS who wish fuller information regarding new inventions, publications, etc. mentioned here, addresses will be furnished, when possible, if (and only if) a stamped addressed envelope or postcard for a reply be sent to the Editor, *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh. To avoid delays, requests of this kind from correspondents abroad will be forwarded to the manufacturer or agent if stamps, postal orders, or imperial or international reply coupons are enclosed for the purpose. The issue of the *Journal* and the heading of the paragraph in which the object of inquiry is described should be given in order to facilitate reference.

Better Strawberries, Please

THERE is no doubt at all that if you can get your strawberries planted in August it makes all the difference to the cropping power of the plants. This refers not only to the crop of the following year, for August-planted strawberries do crop successfully the following season, but it will also make for increased yields in the next three or four years. This has been proved by experiments.

Of course, it is much easier to plant strawberries this month if you propagate your own runners. It is not easy in all cases to get nurserymen to guarantee to supply first-class plants at this time of the year. If there should be readers who have not got a good strain at present, I could help them by telling them where first-class plants are to be had. Runners should always be taken from one-year-old plants.

It helps greatly if sedge-peat is placed around the plants chosen for propagation for a width of 2 feet or so and to a depth of at least 1 inch. The runner plants strike quickly into the peat and when they are lifted later on they will be found to have a very good root system. Of course, the peat also acts as a mulch, and so prevents the moisture evaporating from the soil. In addition, it prevents weed seedlings from growing. The moment the first plant is seen on the runner, it should be pegged down by means of a piece of wire which has been bent in the shape of a hairpin. This should be pushed into the soil just at the back of the forming plant.

As soon as the little plant has rooted properly, it may be dug up with a trowel so that it has got a good ball of soil to its roots, and then it is ready to be planted in its new position. Here it is important to have the ground dug over, and properly composted vegetable refuse or really old farmyard manure should be dug into the soil at the rate of one heavy barrowload to 10 square yards. Do this work as early as possible in order to give the ground a chance of settling. Into the top 2 or 3 inches fork in a fish fertiliser with a 10 per cent potash content at 3 to 4 ounces to the square yard, and use in addition the sedge-

peat at not less than a bucketful to the square yard.

Tread the ground well so as to firm it, or, if you have light sandy soil, run a light roller over the top. Follow this by a light raking to produce a nice tilth and to leave the land level. The planting should be done in rows 2½ feet apart and allowing 18 inches between the plants in the rows. Some gardeners have preferred to plant on the 2-foot-square basis, so that they can use a mechanical cultivator in the spring and late summer. Either way, it does depend to a certain extent whether you intend to leave the bed down for three or four years. It is advisable to give wider spacing when the plants are going to be in the ground longer.

Of course, it is useless to plant strawberries in dirty land. The ground must be cleaned first. My advice to those who have not got really clean land would be to plant early potatoes next spring, with the idea of digging them up before the end of July, so that the ground will be ready for the strawberries. Potatoes are a cleaning crop, and if you manure them well and feed them, and you keep hoeing them and earthing them up, they do have the effect of smothering the weeds and leaving the earth in good heart.

My favourite variety of strawberry is Royal Sovereign, because it has such a lovely flavour. Get hold of the special strain Malling 40. Auchincruive Climax is a variety that is very popular in Scotland: I saw it cropping heavily at Balmoral. Then there are the newer Cambridge University varieties, that are certainly worth while trying: I refer to Cambridge Favourite, Cambridge Rival, and Cambridge Sentry. Perhaps you would like to try the perennial-cropping strawberries or remontants. If so, I would suggest General de Gaulle and Charles Géant Simmen. They bear from June till the middle of November.

I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER M.B.E., N.D.H.

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